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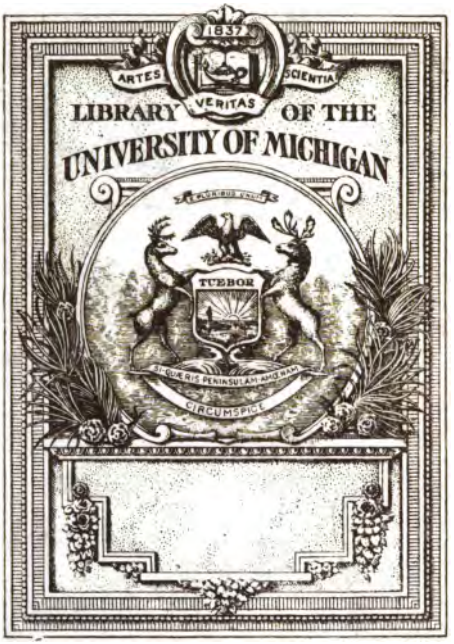
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CHILDREN OF THE GHETTO

THREE NEW NOVELS

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LONDON:
WM. HEINEMANN, 21, BEDFORD STREET, W.C.

CHILDREN OF THE GHETTO

BY

I. ZANGWILL

AUTHOR OF 'THE OLD MAIDS' CLUB,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1892

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PROEM

Not here in our London Ghetto the gates and gaberdines of the olden Ghetto of the Eternal City; yet no lack of signs external by which one may know it, and those who dwell therein. Its narrow streets have no specialty of architecture; its dirt is not picturesque. It is no longer the stage for the high-buskined tragedy of massacre and martyrdom; only for the obscurer, deeper tragedy that evolves from the pressure of its own inward forces, and the long-drawn-out tragi-comedy of sordid and shifty poverty. Natheless, this London Ghetto of ours is a region where, amid uncleanness and squalor, the rose of romance blows yet a little longer in the raw air of English reality; a world which hides beneath its stony and unlovely surface an inner world of dreams, fantastic and poetic as the mirage of the Orient where they were woven, of superstitions grotesque as the cathedral gargoyles of the Dark Ages in which they had birth. And over all

lie tenderly some streaks of celestial light shining from the face of the great Lawgiver.

The folk who compose our pictures are Children of the Ghetto. Their faults are bred of its hovering miasma of persecution, their virtues straitened and intensified by the narrowness of its horizon. And they who have won their way beyond its boundaries must still play their parts in tragedies and comedies — tragedies of spiritual struggle, comedies of material ambition — which are the aftermath of its centuries of dominance, the sequel of that long cruel night in Jewry which coincides with the Christian Era. If they are not the Children, they are at least the Grandchildren of the Ghetto.

The particular Ghetto that is the dark background upon which our pictures will be cast is of voluntary formation.

People who have been living in a Ghetto for a couple of centuries are not able to step outside merely because the gates are thrown down, nor to efface the brands on their souls by putting off the yellow badges. The isolation imposed from without will have come to seem the law of their being. But a minority will pass, by units, into the larger, freer, stranger life amid the execrations of an ever-dwindling majority.

For better or for worse, or for both, the Ghetto will be gradually abandoned, till at last it becomes only a swarming-place for the poor and the ignorant, huddling together for social warmth. Such people are their own Ghetto gates; when they migrate they carry them across the sea to lands where they are not. Into the heart of East London there poured from Russia, from Poland, from Germany, from Holland, streams of Jewish exiles, refugees, settlers, few as well-to-do as the Jew of the proverb, but all rich in their cheerfulness, their industry, and their cleverness. The majority bore with them nothing but their phylacteries and praying shawls, and a good-natured contempt for Christians and Christianity. For the Jew has rarely been embittered by persecution. He knows that he is in *Goluth*, in exile, and that the days of the Messiah are not yet, and he looks upon the persecutor merely as the stupid instrument of an all-wise Providence. So that these poor Jews were rich in all the virtues, devout yet tolerant, and strong in their reliance on Faith, Hope, and more especially Charity.

In the early days of the nineteenth century all Israel were brethren. Even the pioneer colony of wealthy Sephardim, descendants of the Spanish crypto-Jews who had reached England viâ Holland, had modified its boycott of the

poor Ashkenazic immigrants, now they were become an overwhelming majority. There was a superior stratum of Anglo-German Jews who had had time to get on, but all the Ashkenazic tribes lived very much like a happy family, the poor not stand-offish towards the rich, but anxious to afford them opportunities for well-doing. The *Schnorrer* felt no false shame in his begging. He knew it was the rich man's duty to give him unleavened bread at Passover, and coals in the winter, and odd half-crowns at all seasons ; and he regarded himself as the Jacob's ladder by which the rich man mounted to Paradise. But, like all genuine philanthropists, he did not look for gratitude. He felt that virtue was its own reward, especially when he sat in Sabbath vesture at the head of his table on Friday nights, and thanked God in an operatic aria for the white cotton tablecloth and the fried sprats. He sought personal interviews with the most majestic magnates, and had humorous repartees for their lumbering censure.

As for the rich, they gave charity unscrupulously—in the same Oriental, unscientific, informal spirit in which the Dayanim, those cadis of the East End, administered justice. The *Takif*, or man of substance, was as accustomed to the palm of the mendicant outside the Great Synagogue as to the rattling pyx within. They

lived in Bury Street, and Prescott Street, and Finsbury—these aristocrats of the Ghetto—in mansions that are now but congeries of 'apartments.' Few relations had they with Belgravia, but many with Petticoat Lane and the Great Shool, the stately old synagogue which has always been illuminated by candles and still refuses all modern light. The Spanish Jews had a more ancient *snoga*, but it was within a stone's-throw of the 'Duke's Place' edifice. Decorum was not a feature of synagogue worship in those days, nor was the Almighty yet conceived as the holder of formal receptions once a week. Worshippers did not pray with bated breath, as if afraid that the Deity would overhear them. They were at ease in Zion. They passed snuff-boxes and remarks about the weather. The opportunities of skipping afforded by a too exuberant liturgy promoted conversation, and even stocks were discussed in the terrible *longueurs* induced by the meaningless ministerial repetition of prayers already said by the congregation, or by the official recitations of catalogues of purchased benedictions. Sometimes, of course, this announcement of the offertory was interesting, especially when there was sensational competition. The great people bade in guineas for the privilege of rolling up the Scroll of the Law, or drawing the Curtain of the

Ark, or saying a particular *Kaddish* if they were mourners, and then thrills of reverence went round the congregation. The social hierarchy was to some extent graduated by synagogual contributions, and whoever could afford only a little offering had it announced as a 'gift'—a vague term which might equally be the covering of a reticent munificence.

Very few persons 'called up' to the reading of the Law escaped at the cost they had intended, for one is easily led on by an insinuative official incapable of taking low views of the donor's generosity and a little deaf. The moment prior to the declaration of the amount was quite exciting for the audience. On Sabbaths and Festivals the authorities could not write down these sums, for writing is work, and work is forbidden ; even to write them in the book and volume of their brain would have been to charge their memories with an illegitimate if not an impossible burden. Parchment books on a peculiar system, with holes in the pages, and laces to go through the holes, solved the problem of book-keeping without pen and ink. It is possible that many of the worshippers were tempted to give beyond their means for fear of losing the esteem of the *Shammos,* or beadle, a potent personage only next in influence to the President, whose overcoat he obsequiously re-

moved on the greater man's annual visit to the synagogue. The beadle's eye was all over the *Shool* at once, and he could settle an altercation about seats without missing a single response. His automatic amens resounded magnificently through the synagogue, at once a stimulus and a rebuke. It was probably as a concession to him that poor men, who were neither seat-holders nor wearers of chimney-pot hats, were penned within an iron inclosure near the door of the building, and ranged on backless benches, and it says much for the authority of the *Shammos* that not even the *Schnorrer* contested it. Prayers were shouted rapidly by the congregation, and elaborately sung by the *Chazan*. The minister was *vox et præterea nihil*. He was the only musical instrument permitted, and on him devolved the whole onus of making the service attractive. He succeeded. He was helped by the sociability of the gathering, for the synagogue was virtually a Jewish club, the focus of the sectarian life.

Hard times and bitter had some of the fathers of the Ghetto, but they ate their dry bread with the salt of humour, loved their wives, and praised God for His mercies. Unwitting of the genealogies that would be found for them by their prosperous grand-children, 'old clo'' men plied their trade in ambitious content. They

were meek and timorous outside the Ghetto, walking warily for fear of the Christian. Sufferance was still the badge of all their tribe. Yet that there were Jews who held their heads high, let the following legend tell. Few men could shuffle along more inoffensively or cry 'Old clo'' with a meeker twitter than Sleepy Sol. The old man crawled one day, bowed with humility and clo'-bag, into a military mews and uttered his tremulous chirp. To him came one of the hostlers with insolent beetling brow.

'Any gold lace?' faltered Sleepy Sol.

'Get out!' roared the hostler.

'I'll give you de best prices,' pleaded Sleepy Sol.

'Get out!' repeated the hostler, and hustled the old man into the street. 'If I catch you 'ere again, I'll break your neck.'

Sleepy Sol loved his neck, but the profit on gold lace torn from old uniforms was high. Next week he crept into the mews again, trusting to meet another hostler.

'Clo'! clo'!' he chirped faintly.

Alas! the brawny bully was to the fore again, and recognised him.

'You dirty old Jew!' he cried. 'Take that, and that! The next time I sees you, you'll go 'ome on a shutter.'

The old man took 'that,' and 'that,' and went on his way. The next day he came again.

'Clo'! clo' !' he whimpered.

'What!' said the ruffian, his coarse cheeks flooded with angry blood. 'Ev yer forgotten what I promised yer?'

He seized Sleepy Sol by the scruff of the neck.

'I say, why can't you leave the old man alone?'

The hostler stared at the protester, whose presence he had not noticed in the pleasurable excitement of the moment. It was a Jewish young man, indifferently attired in a pepper-and-salt suit. The muscular hostler measured him scornfully with his eye.

'What's to do with you?' he said, with studied contempt.

'Nothing,' admitted the intruder. 'And what harm is he doing you?'

'That's my bizness,' answered the hostler, and tightened his clutch of Sleepy Sol's nape.

'Well, you'd better not mind it,' answered the young man calmly. 'Let go.'

The hostler's thick lips emitted a disdainful laugh.

'Let go, d'you hear?' repeated the young man.

'I'll let go at your nose,' said the hostler, clenching his knobby fist.

'Very well,' said the young man. 'Then I'll pull yours.'

'Oho!' said the hostler, his scowl growing fiercer. 'Yer means bizness, does yer?'

With that he sent Sleepy Sol staggering along the road, and rolled up his shirt-sleeves. His coat was already off.

The young man did not remove his; he quietly assumed the defensive. The hostler sparred up to him with grim earnestness, and launched a terrible blow at his most characteristic feature. The young man blandly put it on one side, and planted a return blow on the hostler's ear. Enraged, his opponent sprang upon him. The young Jew paralyzed him by putting his left hand negligently into his pocket. With his remaining hand he closed the hostler's right eye, and sent the flesh about it into mourning. Then he carelessly tapped a little blood from the hostler's nose, gave him a few thumps on the chest as if to test the strength of his lungs, and laid him sprawling in the courtyard. A brother hostler ran out from the stables, and gave a cry of astonishment.

'You'd better wipe his face,' said the young man curtly.

The new-comer hurried back towards the stables.

'Vait a moment,' said Sleepy Sol. 'I can

sell you a sponge sheap; I've got a beauty in my bag.'

There were plenty of sponges about, but the new-comer bought the second-hand sponge.

'Do you want any more?' the young man affably inquired of his prostrate adversary.

The hostler gave a groan. He was shamed before a friend whom he had early convinced of his fistic superiority.

'No, I reckon he don't,' said the friend, with a knowing grin at the conqueror.

'Then I will wish you a good-day,' said the young man. 'Come along, father.'

'Yes, ma son-in-law,' said Sleepy Sol.

'Do you know who that was, Joe?' said his friend, as he sponged away the blood.

Joe shook his head.

'That was Dutch Sam,' said his friend in an awe-struck whisper.

All Joe's body vibrated with surprise and respect. Dutch Sam was the champion bruiser of his time—in private life an eminent dandy and a prime favourite of his Majesty George IV. And Sleepy Sol had a beautiful daughter, and was perhaps prepossessing himself when washed for the Sabbath.

'Dutch Sam!' Joe repeated.

'Dutch Sam! Why, we've got his picter hanging up inside, only he's naked to the waist.'

'Well, strike me lucky! What a fool I was not to rekkernize 'im!' His battered face brightened up. 'No wonder he licked me!'

Except for the comparative infrequency of the more bestial types of men and women, Judæa has always been a cosmos in little, and its prize-fighters and scientists, its philosophers and 'fences,' its gymnasts and money-lenders, its scholars and stock-brokers, its musicians, chess-players, poets, comic singers, lunatics, saints, publicans, politicians, warriors, poltroons, mathematicians, actors, foreign correspondents, have always been in the first rank. *Nihil alienum a se Judæus putat.*

Joe and his friend fell to recalling Dutch Sam's great feats. Each out-vied the other in admiration for the supreme pugilist.

Next day Sleepy Sol came rampaging down the courtyard. He walked at the rate of five miles to the hour, and despite the weight of his bag his head pointed to the zenith.

'Clo'!' he shrieked. 'Clo'!'

Joe, the hostler, came out; his head was bandaged, and in his hand was gold lace. It was something even to do business with a hero's father-in-law.

But it is given to few men to marry their daughters to champion boxers; and as Dutch Sam was not a Don Quixote, the average pedlar or huckster never enjoyed the luxury of prancing

gait and cock-a-hoop business cry. The primitive fathers of the Ghetto might have borne themselves more jauntily had they foreseen that they were to be the ancestors of mayors and aldermen descended from Castilian hidalgos and Polish kings, and that an unborn historian would conclude that the Ghetto of their day was peopled by princes in disguise. They would have been as surprised to learn who they were as to be informed that they were orthodox. The great Reform split did not occur till well on towards the middle of the century, and the Jews of those days were unable to conceive that a man could be a Jew without eating *kosher* meat, and they would have looked upon the modern distinctions between racial and religious Jews as the sophistries of the convert or the missionary. If their religious life converged to the Great Shool, their social life focussed on Petticoat Lane, a long, narrow thoroughfare which as late as Strype's day was lined with beautiful trees; vastly more pleasant they must have been than the faded barrows and beggars of after days. The Lane—such was its affectionate sobriquet—was the stronghold of hard-shell Judaism, the Alsatia of 'infidelity,' into which no missionary dared set foot, especially no apostate apostle. Even in modern days the new-fangled Jewish minister of the fashionable

suburb, rigged out like the Christian clergyman, has been mistaken for such a *Meshumad*, and pelted with gratuitous vegetables and eleemosynary eggs. The Lane was always the great market-place, and every insalubrious street and alley abutting on it was covered with the overflowings of its commerce and its mud. Wentworth Street and Goulston Street were the chief branches, and in festival times the latter was a pandemonium of caged poultry, clucking and quacking, and cackling and screaming. Fowls and geese and ducks were bought alive, and taken to have their throats cut for a fee by the official slaughterer. At Purim a gaiety, as of the Roman carnival, enlivened the swampy Wentworth Street, and brought a smile into the unwashed face of the pavement. The confectioners' shops, crammed with 'stuffed monkeys' and 'bolas,' were besieged by hilarious crowds of handsome girls and their young men, fat women and their children, all washing down the luscious spicy compounds with cups of chocolate; temporarily erected swinging cradles bore a vociferous many-coloured burden to the skies; cardboard noses, grotesque in their departure from truth, abounded. The Purim *Spiel*, or Purim play, never took root in England, nor was Haman ever burnt in the streets, but *Shalachmonos*, or gifts of the season, passed between friend and friend, and masquerad-

ing parties burst into neighbours' houses. But the Lane was lively enough on the ordinary Friday and Sunday. The famous Sunday Fair was an event of metropolitan importance, and thither came buyers of every sect. The Friday Fair was more local, and confined mainly to edibles. The ante-festival fairs combined something of the other two, for Jews desired to sport new hats and clothes for the holidays as well as to eat extra luxuries, and took the opportunity of a well-marked epoch to invest in new everythings, from oil-cloth to cups and saucers. Especially was this so at Passover, when for a week the poorest Jew must use a supplementary set of crockery and kitchen utensils. A babel of sound, audible for several streets around, denoted market-day in Petticoat Lane, and the pavements were blocked by serried crowds going both ways at once.

It was only gradually that the community was Anglicized. Under the sway of centrifugal impulses, the wealthier members began to form new colonies, moulting their old feathers and replacing them by finer, and flying ever further from the centre. Men of organizing ability founded unrivalled philanthropic and educational institutions on British lines; millionaires fought for municipal and their own political emancipation; brokers brazenly foisted themselves on 'Change; ministers

gave sermons in bad English; an English journal was started; very slowly the conventional Anglican tradition was established; and on that human palimpsest which has borne the inscriptions of all languages and all epochs was writ large the sign-manual of England. Judæa prostrated itself before the Dagon of its hereditary foe, the Philistine, and respectability crept on to freeze the blood of the Orient with its frigid finger, and to blur the vivid tints of the East into the uniform gray of English middle-class life. In the period within which our story moves, only vestiges of the old gaiety and brotherhood remained; the full *al-fresco* flavour was evaporated.

And to-day they are all dead—the *Takeefim* with big hearts and bigger purses, and the humorous *Schnorrers,* who accepted their gold, and the cheerful pious pedlars who rose from one extreme to the other, building up fabulous fortunes in marvellous ways. The young mothers, who suckled their babes in the sun, have passed out of the sunshine; yea, and the babes, too, have gone down with gray heads to the dust. Dead are the fair fat women, with tender hearts, who waddled benignantly through life, ever ready to shed the sympathetic tear, best of wives, and cooks, and mothers; dead are the bald, ruddy old men, who ambled about in faded

carpet slippers, and passed the snuff-box of peace; dead are the stout-hearted youths who sailed away to Tom Tiddler's ground, and dead are the buxom maidens they led under the wedding canopy when they returned. Even the great Dr. Sequira, pompous in white stockings, Physician Extraordinary to the Prince Regent of Portugal, lies vanquished by his life-long adversary, and the Baal Shem himself, King of Cabalists, could command no countervailing miracle.

Where are the little girls in white pinafores with pink sashes who brightened the Ghetto on high days and holidays? Where is the beauteous Betsy of the Victoria Ballet? and where the jocund synagogue dignitary who led off the cotillon with her at the annual Rejoicing of the Law? Worms have long since picked the great financier's brain, the embroidered waistcoats of the bucks have passed even beyond the stage of adorning sweeps on May Day, and Dutch Sam's fist is bonier than ever. The same mould covers them all—those who donated guineas and those who donated 'gifts,' the rogues and the hypocrites and the wedding-drolls, the observant and the lax, the purse-proud and the lowly, the coarse and the genteel, the wonderful chapmen and the luckless *Schlemihls*, Rabbi and Dayan and Shochet, the scribes who wrote the sacred

scroll and the cantors who trolled it off mellifluous tongues, and the betting-men who never listened to it; the grimy Russians, of the capotes and the earlocks, and the blue-blooded Dons, 'the gentlemen of the Mahamad,' who ruffled it with swords and knee-breeches in the best Christian society. Those who kneaded the toothsome 'bolas' lie with those who ate them; and the marriage-brokers repose with those they mated. The olives and the cucumbers grow green and fat as of yore, but their lovers are mixed with a soil that is barren of them. The restless, bustling crowds that jostled laughingly in Rag Fair are at rest in the 'House of Life'; the pageant of their strenuous generation is vanished as a dream. They died with the declaration of God's unity on their stiffening lips, and the certainty of resurrection in their pulseless hearts, and a faded Hebrew inscription on a tomb or an unread entry on a synagogue brass is their only record. And yet, perhaps their generation is not all dust. Perchance, here and there, some decrepit centenarian rubs his purblind eyes with the ointment of memory, and sees these pictures of the past, hallowed by the consecration of time, and finds his shrivelled cheek wet with the pathos sanctifying the joys that have been.

BOOK I.—THE CHILDREN OF THE GHETTO.

CHAPTER I.

THE BREAD OF AFFLICTION.

A DEAD and gone wag called the street 'Fashion Street,' and most of the people who live in it do not even see the joke. If it could exchange names with 'Rotten Row,' both places would be more appropriately designated. It is a dull, squalid, narrow thoroughfare in the East End of London, connecting Spitalfields with Whitechapel, and branching off in blind alleys. In the days when little Esther Ansell trudged its unclean pavements, its extremities were within earshot of the blasphemies from some of the vilest quarters and filthiest rookeries in the capital of the civilized world. Some of these clotted spiders'-webs have since been swept away

by the besom of the social reformer, and the spiders have scurried off into darker crannies.

There were the conventional touches about the London street-picture, as Esther Ansell sped through the freezing mist of the December evening, with a pitcher in her hand, looking in her Oriental colouring like a miniature of Rebecca going to the well. A female street-singer, with a trail of infants of dubious maternity, troubled the air with a piercing melody; a pair of slatterns with arms akimbo reviled each other's relatives; a drunkard lurched along, babbling amiably; an organ-grinder, blue-nosed as his monkey, set some ragged children jigging under the watery rays of a street-lamp. Esther drew her little plaid shawl tightly around her, and ran on without heeding these familiar details, her chilled feet absorbing the damp of the murky pavement through the worn soles of her cumbrous boots. They were masculine boots, kicked off by some intoxicated tramp, and picked up by Esther's father. Moses Ansell had a habit of lighting on windfalls, due, perhaps, to his meek manner of walking with bent head, as though literally bowed beneath the yoke of the Captivity. Providence rewarded him for his humility by occasional treasure-trove. Esther had received a pair of new boots from her school a week before,

and the substitution of the tramp's foot-gear for her own resulted in a net profit of half a crown, and kept Esther's little brothers and sisters in bread for a week. At school, under her teacher's eye, Esther was very unobtrusive about the feet for the next fortnight, but as the fear of being found out died away, even her rather morbid conscience condoned the deception in view of the stomachic gain.

They gave away bread and milk at the school, too, but Esther and her brothers and sisters never took either, for fear of being thought in want of them. The superiority of a class-mate is hard to bear, and a high-spirited child will not easily acknowledge starvation in presence of a roomful of purse-proud urchins, some of them able to spend a farthing a day on pure luxuries. Moses Ansell would have been grieved had he known his children were refusing the bread he could not give them. Trade was slack in the sweating dens, and Moses, who had always lived from hand to mouth, had latterly held less than ever between the one and the other. He had applied for help to the Jewish Board of Guardians, but red-tape rarely unwinds as quickly as hunger coils itself; moreover, Moses was an old offender in poverty at the Court of Charity. But there was one species of alms which Moses could not be denied, and the existence of which

Esther could not conceal from him as she concealed that of the eleemosynary breakfasts at the school. For it was known to all men that soup and bread were to be had for the asking thrice a week at the institution in Fashion Street, and in the Ansell household the opening of the soup-kitchen was looked forward to as the dawn of a golden age, when it would be impossible to pass more than one day without bread. The vaguely-remembered smell of the soup threw a poetic fragrance over the coming winter. Every year since Esther's mother had died, the child had been sent to fetch home the provender, for Moses, who was the only other available member of the family, was always busy praying when he had nothing better to do. And so to-night Esther fared to the kitchen with her red pitcher, passing in her childish eagerness numerous women shuffling along on the same errand, and bearing uncouth tin cans supplied by the institution. An individualistic instinct of cleanliness made Esther prefer the family pitcher. To-day this liberty of choice has been taken away, and the regulation can, numbered and stamped, serves as a soup-ticket.

There was quite a crowd of applicants outside the stable-like doors of the kitchen when Esther arrived, a few with well-lined stomachs, perhaps, but the majority famished and shivering. The

feminine element swamped the rest, but there were about a dozen men and a few children among the group, most of the men scarce taller than the children—strange, stunted, swarthy, hairy creatures, with muddy complexions illumined by black, twinkling eyes. A few were of imposing stature, wearing coarse, dusty felt hats or peaked caps, with shaggy beards or faded scarfs around their throats. Here and there, too, was a woman of comely face and figure, but for the most part it was a collection of crones, prematurely aged, with weird, wan, old-world features, slipshod and draggle-tailed, their heads bare, or covered with dingy shawls in lieu of bonnets—red shawls, gray shawls, brick-dust shawls, mud-coloured shawls. Yet there was an indefinable touch of romance and pathos about the tawdriness and witch-like ugliness, and an underlying identity about the crowd of Polish, Russian, German, Dutch Jewesses, mutually apathetic, and pressing forwards. Some of them had infants at their bare breasts, who drowsed quietly with intervals of ululation. The women devoid of shawls had nothing around their necks to protect them from the cold ; the dusky throats were exposed, and sometimes even the first hooks and eyes of the bodice were unnecessarily undone. The majority wore cheap earrings and black wigs

with preternaturally polished hair ; where there was no wig the hair was touzled.

At half-past five the stable-doors were thrown open, and the crowd pressed through a long, narrow, whitewashed stone corridor into a barn-like compartment, with a whitewashed ceiling traversed by wooden beams. Within this compartment, and leaving but a narrow, circumscribing border, was a sort of cattle-pen, into which the paupers crushed, awaiting amid discomfort and universal jabber the divine moment. The single jet of gas-light depending from the ceiling flared upon the strange simian faces, and touched them into a grotesque picturesqueness that would have delighted Doré.

They felt hungry, these picturesque people ; their near and dear ones were hungering at home. Voluptuously savouring in imagination the operation of the soup, they forgot its operation as a dole in aid of wages ; were unconscious of the grave economical possibilities of pauperization and the rest, and quite willing to swallow their independence with the soup. Even Esther, who had read much and was sensitive, accepted unquestioningly the theory of the universe that was held by most people about her, that human beings were distinguished from animals in having to toil terribly for a meagre crust, but that their lot was lightened by the existence of a small

and semi-divine class called *Takeefim*, or rich people, who gave away what they didn't want. How these rich people came to be Esther did not inquire ; they were as much a part of the constitution of things as clouds and horses. The semi-celestial variety was rarely to be met with. It lived far away from the Ghetto, and a small family of it was said to occupy a whole house. Representatives of it, clad in rustling silks or impressive broadcloth, and radiating an indefinable aroma of superhumanity, sometimes came to the school, preceded by the beaming headmistress ; and then all the little girls rose and curtseyed, and the best of them, passing as average members of the class, astonished the semi-divine persons by their intimate acquaintance with the topography of the Pyrenees and the disagreements of Saul and David, the intercourse of the two species ending in effusive smiles and general satisfaction. But the dullest of the girls was alive to the comedy, and had a good-humoured contempt for the unworldliness of the semi-divine persons, who spoke to them as if they were not going to recommence squabbling, and pulling one another's hair, and copying one another's sums, and stealing one another's needles, the moment the semi-celestial backs were turned.

To-night, semi-divine persons were to be seen

in a galaxy of splendour, for in the reserved standing-places, behind the white deal counter, was gathered a group of philanthropists. The room was an odd-shaped polygon, partially lined with eight boilers, whose great wooden lids were raised by pulleys and balanced by red-painted iron balls. In the corner stood the cooking-engine. Cooks in white caps and blouses stirred the steaming soup with long wooden paddles. A tradesman besought the attention of the Jewish reporters to the improved boiler he had manufactured, and the superintendent adjured the newspaper men not to omit his name; while amid the soberly-clad clergymen flitted, like gorgeous humming-birds through a flock of crows, the marriageable daughters of an East End minister.

When a sufficient number of semi-divinities was gathered together, the President addressed the meeting at considerable length, striving to impress upon the clergymen and other philanthropists present that charity was a virtue, and appealing to the Bible, the Koran, and even the Vedas, for confirmation of his proposition. Early in his speech the sliding-door that separated the cattle-pen from the kitchen proper had to be closed, because the jostling crowd jabbered so much and inconsiderate infants squalled, and there did not seem to be any general desire to hear

the President's ethical views. They were a low material lot, who thought only of their bellies, and did but chatter the louder when the speech was shut out. They had overflowed their barriers by this time, and were surging cruelly to and fro, and Esther had to keep her elbows close to her sides lest her arms should be dislocated. Outside the stable doors a shifting array of boys and girls hovered hungrily and curiously. When the President had finished, the Rabbinate was invited to address the philanthropists, which it did at not less length, eloquently seconding the proposition that charity was a virtue. Then the door was slid back, and the first two paupers were admitted, the rest of the crowd being courageously kept at bay by the superintendent. The head cook filled a couple of plates with soup, dipping a great pewter pot into the caldron. The Rabbinate then uplifted its eyes heavenwards, and said the grace:

'Blessed art Thou, O Lord, King of the universe, according to whose word all things exist.'

It then tasted a spoonful of the soup, as did also the President and several of the visitors, the passage of the fluid along the palate invariably evoking approving ecstatic smiles; and, indeed, there was more body in it this opening night than there would be later, when, in due course, the bulk of the meat would take its

legitimate place among the pickings of office. The sight of the delighted deglutition of the semi-divine persons made Esther's mouth water as she struggled for breathing space on the outskirts of Paradise. The impatience which fretted her was almost allayed by visions of stout-hearted Solomon and gentle Rachel and whimpering little Sarah and Ikey all gulping down the delicious draught. Even the more stoical father and grandmother were a little in her thoughts. The Ansells had eaten nothing but a slice of dry bread each in the morning. Here before her, in the land of Goshen, flowing with soup, was piled up a heap of halves of loaves, while endless other loaves were ranged along the shelves as for a giant's table. Esther looked ravenously at the four-square tower built of edible bricks, shivering as the biting air sought out her back through a sudden interstice in the heaving mass. The draught reminded her more keenly of her little ones huddled together in the fireless garret at home. Ah, what a happy night was in store! She must not let them devour the two loaves to-night; that would be criminal extravagance. No, one would suffice for the banquet; the other must be carefully put by. 'To-morrow is also a day,' as the old grandmother used to say in her quaint jargon. But the banquet was not to be spread so fast as Esther's fancy could fly; the

doors must be shut again, and other semi-divine and wholly divine persons (in white ties) must move and second (with eloquence and length) votes of thanks to the President, the Rabbinate, and all other available recipients; a French visitor must express his admiration of English charity. But at last the turn of the gnawing stomachs came. The motley crowd, still babbling, made a slow forward movement, squeezing painfully through the narrow aperture, and shivering a plate-glass window-pane at the side of the cattle-pen in the crush; the semi-divine persons rubbed their hands and smiled genially; ingenious paupers tried to dodge round to the caldrons by the semi-divine entrance; the tropical humming-birds fluttered among the crows; there was a splashing of ladles and a gurgling of cascades of soup into the cans, and a hubbub of voices; a toothless, white-haired, blear-eyed hag lamented in excellent English that soup was refused her, owing to her case not having yet been investigated, and her tears moistened the one loaf she received. In like hard case a Russian threw himself on the stones and howled. But at last Esther was running through the mist, warmed by the pitcher which she hugged to her bosom, and suppressing the blind impulse to pinch the pair of loaves tied up in her pinafore. She almost flew up the dark flight of

stairs to the attic in Royal Street. Little Sarah was sobbing querulously. Esther, conscious of being an angel of deliverance, tried to take the last two steps at once, tripped and tumbled ignominiously against the garret-door, which flew back and let her fall into the room with a crash. The pitcher shivered into fragments under her aching little bosom, the odorous soup spread itself in an irregular pool over the boards, and flowed under the two beds and dripped down the crevices into the room beneath. Esther burst into tears; her frock was wet and greased, her hands were cut and bleeding. Little Sarah checked her sobs at the disaster. Moses Ansell was not yet returned from evening service, but the withered old grandmother, whose wizened face loomed through the gloom of the cold, unlit garret, sat up on the bed and cursed her angrily for a *Schlemihl*. A sense of injustice made Esther cry more bitterly. She had never broken anything for years past. Ikey, an eerie-looking dot of four and a half years, tottered towards her (all the Ansells had learnt to see in the dark), and, nestling his curly head against her wet bodice, murmured:

'Neva mind, Esty; I lat oo teep in my new bed.'

The consolation of sleeping in that imaginary new bed to the possession of which Ikey was

always looking forward was apparently adequate; for Esther got up from the floor and untied the loaves from her pinafore. A reckless spirit of defiance possessed her, as of a gambler who throws good money after bad. They should have a mad revelry to-night—the two loaves should be eaten at once. One (minus a hunk for father's supper) would hardly satisfy six voracious appetites. Solomon and Rachel, irrepressibly excited by the sight of the bread, rushed at it greedily, snatched a loaf from Esther's hand, and tore off a crust each with their fingers.

'Heathen,' cried the old grandmother. 'Washing and benediction!'

Solomon was used to being called a heathen by the *Bube*. He put on his cap and went grudgingly to the bucket of water that stood in a corner of the room, and tipped a drop over his fingers. It is to be feared that neither the quantity of water nor the area of hand covered reached even the minimum enjoined by Rabbinical law. He murmured something intended for Hebrew during the operation, and was beginning to mutter the devout little sentence which precedes the eating of bread, when Rachel, who as a female was less driven to the lavatory ceremony, and had thus got ahead of him,

paused in her ravenous mastication and made a wry face. Solomon took a huge bite at his crust, then he uttered an inarticulate 'Pooh!' and spat out his mouthful.

There was no salt in the bread.

CHAPTER II.

THE SWEATER.

THE catastrophe was not complete. There were some long thin fibres of pale boiled meat, whose juices had gone to enrich the soup, lying about the floor or adhering to the fragments of the pitcher. Solomon, who was a curly-headed chap of infinite resource, discovered them, and it had just been decided to neutralize the insipidity of the bread by the far-away flavour of the meat, when a peremptory knocking was heard at the door, and a dazzling vision of beauty bounded into the room.

'Ere! What are you doin', leavin' things leak through our ceiling?'

Becky Belcovitch was a buxom, bouncing girl, with cherry cheeks that looked exotic in a land of pale faces. She wore a mass of black crisp ringlets aggressively suggestive of singeing and curl-papers. She was the belle of Royal Street in her spare time, and womanly triumphs

dogged even her working hours. She was sixteen years old, and devoted her youth and beauty to buttonholes. In the East End, where a spade is a spade, a buttonhole is a buttonhole, and not a primrose or a pansy. There are two kinds of buttonholes—the coarse for slop goods, and the fine for gentlemanly wear. Becky concentrated herself on superior buttonholes, which are worked with fine twist. She stitched them in her father's workshop, which was more comfortable than a stranger's, and better fitted for evading the Factory Acts. To-night she was radiant in silk and jewellery, and her pert snub nose had the insolence of felicity which Agamemnon deprecated. Seeing her, you would have as soon connected her with Esoteric Buddhism as with buttonholes.

The *Bube* explained the situation in voluble Yiddish, and made Esther wince again under the impassioned invective on her clumsiness. The old beldame expended enough Oriental metaphor on the accident to fit up a minor poet. If the family died of starvation, their blood would be upon her grand-daughter's head.

'Well, why don't you wipe it up, stupid?' said Becky. ''Ow would you like to pay for Pesach's new coat? It just dripped past his shoulder.'

'I'm so sorry, Becky,' said Esther, striving hard to master the tremor in her voice. And

drawing a house-cloth from a mysterious recess, she went down on her knees in a practical prayer for pardon.

Becky snorted and went back to her sister's engagement-party. For this was the secret of her gorgeous vesture, of her glittering earrings, and her massive brooch, as it was the secret of the transformation of the Belcovitch workshop (and living room) into a hall of dazzling light. Four separate gaunt bare arms of iron gas-pipe lifted hymeneal torches. The labels from reels of cotton, pasted above the mantelpiece as indexes of work done, alone betrayed the past and future of the room. At a long narrow table, covered with a white tablecloth spread with rum, gin, biscuits and fruit, and decorated with two wax candles in tall brass candlesticks, stood or sat a group of swarthy, neatly-dressed Poles, most of them in high hats. A few women wearing wigs, silk dresses, and gold chains wound round half-washed necks, stood about outside the inner circle. A stooping black-bearded, blear-eyed man in a long threadbare coat and a black skull-cap, on either side of which hung a corkscrew curl, sat abstractedly eating the almonds and raisins, in the central place of honour which befits a Maggid. Before him were pens and ink and a roll of parchment. This was the engagement contract.

The damages of breach of promise were assessed in advance, and without respect to sex. Whichever side repented of the bargain undertook to pay ten pounds by way of compensation for the broken pledge. As a nation, Israel is practical and free from cant. Romance and moonshine are beautiful things, but behind the glittering veil are always the stern realities of things and the weaknesses of human nature.

The high contracting parties were signing the document as Becky returned. The bridegroom, who halted a little on one leg, was a tall, sallow man named Pesach Weingott. He was a boot-maker, who could expound the Talmud and play the fiddle, but was unable to earn a living. He was marrying Fanny Belcovitch because his parents-in-law would give him free board and lodging for a year, and because he liked her. Fanny was a plump, pulpy girl, not in the prime of youth. Her complexion was fair, and her manner lymphatic; and if she was not so well favoured as her sister, she was more amiable and pleasant. She could sing sweetly in Yiddish and in English, and had once been a pantomime fairy at ten shillings a week, and had even flourished a cutlass as a midshipman. But she had long since given up the stage, to become her father's right-hand woman in the workshop. She made coats from morning to midnight at a

big machine with a massive treadle, and had pains in her chest even before she fell in love with Pesach Weingott.

There was a hubbub of congratulation ('*Mazzoltov*, *Mazzoltov*,' 'Good luck'), and a palsy of handshaking, when the contract was signed. Remarks, grave and facetious, flew about in Yiddish, with phrases of Polish and Russian thrown in for auld lang syne, and cups and jugs were broken in reminder of the transiency of things mortal. The Belcovitches had been saving up their already broken crockery for the occasion. The hope was expressed that Mr. and Mrs. Belcovitch would live to see 'rejoicings' on their other daughter, and to see their daughters' daughters under the *Chuppah*, or wedding canopy.

Becky's hardened cheek blushed under the oppressive jocularity. Everybody spoke Yiddish habitually at No. 1, Royal Street, except the younger generation, and that spoke it to the elder.

'I always said no girl of mine should marry a Dutchman.'

It was a dominant thought of Mr. Belcovitch's, and it rose spontaneously to his lips at this joyful moment. Next to a Christian, a Dutch Jew stood lowest in the gradation of potential sons-in-law. Spanish Jews, earliest arrivals by

way of Holland, after the Restoration, are a class apart, and look down on the later imported Ashkenazim, embracing both Poles and Dutchmen in their impartial contempt. But this does not prevent the Pole and the Dutchman from despising each other. To a Dutch or Russian Jew, the 'Pullack,' or Polish Jew, is a poor creature; and scarce anything can exceed the complacency with which the 'Pullack' looks down upon the 'Litvok,' or Lithuanian, the degraded being whose Shibboleth is literally Sibboleth, and who says 'ee' where rightly-constituted persons say 'oo.' To mimic the mincing pronunciation of the 'Litvok' affords the 'Pullack' a sense of superiority almost equalling that possessed by the English Jew, whose mispronunciation of the Holy Tongue is his title to rank far above all foreign varieties. Yet a vein of brotherhood runs beneath all these feelings of mutual superiority; like the cliqueism which draws together 'old clo'' dealers, though each gives fifty per cent. more than any other dealer in the trade. The Dutch foregather in a district called 'The Dutch Tenters'; they eat voraciously, and almost monopolize the ice cream, hot pea, diamond-cutting, cucumber, herring, and cigar trades. They are not so cute as the Russians. Their women are distinguished from other women by the flaccidity of

their bodices; some wear small woollen caps and sabots.

When Esther read in her school-books that the note of the Dutch character was cleanliness, she wondered. She looked in vain for the scrupulously scoured floors and the shining caps and faces. Only in the matter of tobacco smoke did the Dutch people she knew live up to the geographical 'Readers.'

German Jews gravitate to Polish and Russian; and French Jews mostly stay in France. *Ici on ne parle pas Français* is the only lingual certainty in the London Ghetto, which is a cosmopolitan quarter.

'I always said no girl of mine should marry a Dutchman.'

Mr. Belcovitch spoke as if at the close of a long career devoted to avoiding Dutch alliances, forgetting that not even one of his daughters was yet secure.

'Nor any girl of mine,' said Mrs. Belcovitch, as if starting a separate proposition. 'I would not trust a Dutchman with my medicine-bottle, much less with my Alte or my Becky. Dutchmen were not behind the door when the Almighty gave out noses, and their deceitfulness is in proportion to their noses.'

The company murmured assent, and one gentleman, with a rather large organ, concealed

it in a red cotton handkerchief, trumpeting uneasily.

'The Holy One, blessed be He, has given them larger noses than us,' said the Maggid, 'because they have to talk through them so much.'

A guffaw greeted this sally. The Maggid's wit was relished even when not coming from the pulpit. To the outsider this disparagement of the Dutch nose might have seemed a case of pot calling kettle black. The Maggid poured himself out a glass of rum, under cover of the laughter, and murmuring 'Life to you,' in Hebrew, gulped it down, and added, 'They oughtn't to call it the Dutch tongue, but the Dutch nose.'

'Yes, I always wonder how they can understand one another,' said Mrs. Belcovitch, 'with their *chatuchayacatigewesepoopa*.'

She laughed heartily over her onomatopœtic addition to the Yiddish vocabulary, screwing up her nose to give it due effect. She was a small, sickly-looking woman, with black eyes and shrivelled skin, and the wig without which no virtuous wife is complete. For a married woman must sacrifice her tresses on the altar of home, lest she snare other men with such sensuous baits. As a rule, she enters into the spirit of the self-denying

ordinance so enthusiastically as to become hideous hastily in every other respect. It is forgotten that a husband is also a man. Mrs. Belcovitch's head was not completely shaven and shorn, for a lower stratum of an unmatched shade of brown peeped out in front of the *Shaitel*, not even coinciding as to the route of the central parting.

Meantime Pesach Weingott and Alte (Fanny) Belcovitch held each other's hand, guiltily conscious of Batavian corpuscles in the young man's blood. Pesach had a Dutch uncle, but as he had never talked like him Alte alone knew. Alte wasn't her real name, by the way, and Alte was the last person in the world to know what it was. She was the Belcovitches' first successful child; the others all died before she was born. Driven frantic by a fate crueller than barrenness, the Belcovitches consulted an old Polish Rabbi, who told them they displayed too much fond solicitude for their children, provoking Heaven thereby; in future, they were to let no one but themselves know their next child's name, and never to whisper it till the child was safely married. In such wise, Heaven would not be incessantly reminded of the existence of their dear one, and would not go out of its way to castigate them.

The ruse succeeded, and Alte was anxiously

waiting to change both her names under the *Chuppah*, and to gratify her life-long curiosity on the subject. Meantime, her mother had been calling her 'Alte,' or 'old un,' which sounded endearing to the child, but grated on the woman arriving ever nearer to the years of discretion. Occasionally, Mrs. Belcovitch succumbed to the prevailing tendency, and called her 'Fanny,' just as she sometimes thought of herself as Mrs. Belcovitch, though her name was Kosminski.

When Alte first went to school in London, the head-mistress said, 'What's your name?' The little 'old un' had not sufficient English to understand the question, but she remembered that the head-mistress had made the same sounds to the preceding applicant, and, where some little girls would have put their pinafores to their eyes and cried, Fanny showed herself full of resource. As the last little girl, though patently awe-struck, had come off with flying colours, merely by whimpering 'Fanny Belcovitch,' Alte imitated these sounds as well as she was able.

'Fanny Belcovitch, did you say?' said the head-mistress, pausing with arrested pen.

Alte nodded her flaxen poll vigorously.

'Fanny Belcovitch,' she repeated, getting the syllables better on a second hearing.

The head-mistress turned to an assistant.

'Isn't it astonishing how names repeat themselves? Two girls, one after the other, both with exactly the same name.'

They were used to coincidences in the school, where, by reason of the tribal relationship of the pupils, there was a great run on some half a dozen names.

Mr. Kosminski took several years to understand that Alte had disowned him. When it dawned upon him he was not angry, and acquiesced in his fate. It was the only domestic detail in which he had allowed himself to be led by his children. Like his wife, Chayah, he was gradually persuaded into the belief that he was a born Belcovitch, or, at least, that Belcovitch was Kosminski translated into English.

Blissfully unconscious of the Dutch taint in Pesach Weingott, Bear Belcovitch bustled about in reckless hospitality. He felt that engagements were not everyday events, and that even if his whole half-sovereign's worth of festive provision was swallowed up, he would not mind much. He wore a high hat, a well-preserved black coat, with a cutaway waistcoat, showing a quantity of glazed shirt-front and a massive watch-chain. They were his Sabbath clothes, and, like the Sabbath they honoured, were of immemorial antiquity. The shirt served him for seven Sabbaths, or a week of Sabbaths, being

carefully folded after each. His boots had the Sabbath polish. The hat was the one he bought when he first set up as a *Baal Habaas*, or respectable pillar of the synagogue; for even in the smallest *Chevra* the high hat comes next in sanctity to the Scroll of the Law, and he who does not wear it may never hope to attain to congregational dignities. The gloss on that hat was wonderful, considering it had been out unprotected in all winds and weathers. Not that Mr. Belcovitch did not possess an umbrella. He had two—one of fine new silk, the other a medley of broken ribs and cotton rags. Becky had given him the first to prevent the family disgrace of the spectacle of his promenades with the second. But he would not carry the new one on week-days because it was too good. And on Sabbaths it is a sin to carry any umbrella. So Becky's self-sacrifice was vain, and her umbrella stood in the corner, a standing gratification to the proud possessor.

Kosminski had had a hard fight for his substance, and was not given to waste. He was a tall, harsh-looking man of fifty, with grizzled hair, to whom life meant work, and work meant money, and money meant savings. In Parliamentary blue-books, English newspapers, and the Berner Street Socialistic Club, he was called a 'sweater,' and the comic papers pictured him

with a protuberant paunch and a greasy smile; but he had not the remotest idea that he was other than a God-fearing, industrious, and even philanthropic citizen. The measure that had been dealt to him he did but deal to others. He saw no reason why immigrant paupers should not live on a crown a week while he taught them how to handle a press-iron or work a sewing-machine. They were much better off than in Poland. He would have been glad of such an income himself in those terrible first days of English life, when he saw his wife and his two babes starving before his eyes, and was only precluded from investing a casual twopence in poison by ignorance of the English name for anything deadly. And what did he live on now? The fowl, the pint of haricot beans, and the haddocks which Chayah purchased for the Sabbath overlapped into the middle of next week; a quarter of a pound of coffee lasted the whole week, the grounds being decocted till every grain of virtue was extracted. Black bread and potatoes and pickled herrings made up the bulk of the every-day diet. No, no one could accuse Bear Belcovitch of fattening on the entrails of his employés.

The furniture was of the simplest and shabbiest —no æsthetic instinct urged the Kosminskis to overpass the bare necessities of existence, except

in dress. The only concessions to art were a crudely-coloured *Mizrach* on the east wall, to indicate the direction towards which the Jew should pray, and the mantelpiece mirror, which was bordered with yellow scalloped paper (to save the gilt), and ornamented at each corner with paper roses that bloomed afresh every Passover. And yet Bear Belcovitch had lived in much better style in Poland, possessing a brass wash-hand basin, a copper saucepan, silver spoons, a silver consecration beaker, and a cupboard with glass doors, and he frequently adverted to their fond memories. But he brought nothing away except his bedding, and that was pawned in Germany on the route. When he arrived in London he had with him three groschen and a family.

'What do you think, Pesach!' said Becky, as soon as she could get at her prospective brother-in-law through the barriers of congratulatory countrymen. 'The stuff that came through there'—she pointed to the discoloured fragment of ceiling—'was soup. That silly little Esther spilt all she got from the Kitchen.'

'*Achi nebbich*, poor little thing!' cried Mrs. Kosminski, who was in a tender mood; 'very likely it hungers them sore upstairs. The father is out of work.'

'Knowest thou what, mother,' put in Fanny.

'Suppose we give them our soup. Aunt Leah has just fetched it for us. Have we not a special supper to-night?'

'But father?' murmured the little woman dubiously.

'Oh, he won't notice it. I don't think he knows the Soup Kitchen opens to-night. Let me, mother.'

And Fanny, letting Pesach's hand go, slipped out to the bedroom that served as a kitchen, and bore the still steaming pot upstairs. Pesach, who had pursued her, followed with some hunks of bread and a piece of lighted candle, which, while intended only to illumine the journey, came in handy at the terminus. And the festive company grinned and winked when the pair disappeared, and made jocular quotations from the Old Testament and the Rabbis. But the lovers did not kiss when they came out of the garret of the Ansells; their eyes were wet, and they went softly downstairs hand-in-hand, feeling linked by a deeper love than before.

Thus did Providence hand over the soup the Belcovitches took, from old habit, to a more necessitous quarter, and demonstrate in double sense that charity never faileth. Nor was this the only mulct which Providence exacted from the happy father, for later on a townsman of his appeared on the scene in a long capote, and with

a grimy, woebegone expression. He was a 'greener' of the greenest order, having landed at the docks only a few hours ago, bringing over with him a great deal of luggage in the shape of faith in God and in the auriferous character of London pavements. On arriving in England, he gave a casual glance at the Metropolis, and demanded to be directed to a synagogue, wherein to shake himself after the journey. His devotions over, he tracked out Mr. Kosminski, whose address, on a much-creased bit of paper, had been his talisman of hope during the voyage. In his native town, where the Jews groaned beneath divers and sore oppressions, the fame of Kosminski, the pioneer, the Crœsus, was a legend. Mr. Kosminski was prepared for these contingencies. He went to his bedroom, dragged out a heavy wooden chest from under the bed, unlocked it, and plunged his hand into a large dirty linen bag full of coins. The instinct of generosity which was upon him made him count out forty-eight of them. He bore them to the 'greener' in over-brimming palms, and the foreigner, unconscious how much he owed to the felicitous coincidence of his visit with Fanny's betrothal, saw fortune visibly within his grasp. He went out, his heart bursting with gratitude, his pocket with four dozen farthings. They took him in and gave him hot soup at a Poor Jews'

Shelter, whither his townsman had directed him. Kosminski returned to the banqueting room, thrilling from head to foot with the approval of his conscience. He patted Becky's curly head, and said:

'Well, Becky, when shall we be dancing at your wedding?'

Becky shook her curls. Her young men could not have a poorer opinion of one another than Becky had of them all. Their homage pleased her, though it did not raise them in her esteem. Lovers grew like blackberries—only more so; for they were an evergreen stock. Or, as her mother put it in her coarse, peasant manner, *Chasanim* were as plentiful as the street-dogs. Becky's beaux sat on the stairs before she was up, and became early risers in their love for her, each anxious to be the first to bid their Penelope of the buttonholes good-morrow. It was said that Kosminski's success as a 'sweater' was due to his beauteous Becky, the flower of sartorial youth gravitating to the work-room of this East London Laban. What they admired in Becky was that there was so much of her. Still, it was not enough to go round, and though Becky might keep nine lovers in hand without fear of being set down as a flirt, a larger number of tailors would have been less consistent with prospective monogamy.

'I'm not going to throw myself away like Fanny,' said she confidentially to Pesach Weingott in the course of the evening.

He smiled apologetically.

'Fanny always had low views,' continued Becky. 'But I always said I would marry a gentleman.'

'And I dare say,' answered Pesach, stung into the retort, 'Fanny could marry a gentleman, too, if she wanted.'

Becky's idea of a gentleman was a clerk or a schoolmaster, who had no manual labour except scribbling or flogging. In her matrimonial views Becky was typical. She despised the status of her parents, and looked to marry out of it. They, for their part, could not understand the desire to be other than themselves.

'I don't say Fanny couldn't,' she admitted. 'All I say is, nobody could call this a luck-match.'

'Ah, thou hast me too many flies in thy nose,' reprovingly interposed Mrs. Belcovitch, who had just crawled up. 'Thou art too high-class.'

Becky tossed her head. 'I've got a new dolman,' she said, turning to one of her young men, who was present by special grace. 'You should see me in it. I look noble.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Belcovitch proudly. 'It shines in the sun.'

'Is it like the one Bessie Sugarman's got?' inquired the young man.

'Bessie Sugarman!' echoed Becky scornfully. 'She gets all her things from the tallyman. She pretends to be so grand, but all her jewellery is paid for at so much a week.'

'So long as it is paid for,' said Fanny, catching the words, and turning a happy face on her sister.

'Not so jealous, Alte,' said her mother. 'When I shall win on the lotteree, I will buy thee also a dolman.'

Almost all the company speculated on the Hamburg lottery, which, whether they were speaking Yiddish or English, they invariably accentuated on the last syllable. When an inhabitant of the Ghetto won even his money back, the news circulated like wild-fire, and there was a rush to the agents for tickets. The chances of sudden wealth floated like dazzling will-o'-the-wisps on the horizon, illumining the gray perspectives of the future. The lotteree took the poor ticket-holders out of themselves, and gave them an interest in life apart from machine-cotton, lasts, or tobacco-leaf. The English labourer, who has been forbidden State lotteries, relieves the monotony of existence by an extremely indirect interest in the achievements of a special breed of horses.

'*Nu*, Pesach, another glass of rum,' said Mr. Belcovitch genially to his future son-in-law and boarder.

'Yes, I will,' said Pesach. 'After all, this is the first time I've got engaged.'

The rum was of Mr. Belcovitch's own manufacture; its ingredients were unknown, but the fame of it travelled on currents of air to the remotest parts of the house. Even the inhabitants of the garrets sniffed and thought of turpentine. Pesach swallowed the decoction, murmuring 'To life' afresh. His throat felt like the funnel of a steamer, and there were tears in his eyes when he put down the glass.

'Ah, that was good!' he murmured.

'Not like thy English drinks, eh?' said Mr. Belcovitch.

'England!' snorted Pesach, in royal disdain. 'What a country! Daddle-doo is a language, and gingerbeer a liquor.'

'Daddle-doo' was Pesach's way of saying 'That'll do.' It was one of the first English idioms he picked up, and its puerility made him facetious. It seemed to smack of the nursery. When a nation expressed its soul thus, the existence of a beverage like gingerbeer could occasion no further surprise.

'You shan't have anything stronger than gingerbeer when we're married,' said Fanny

laughingly. 'I am not going to have any drinking.'

'But I'll get drunk on gingerbeer,' Pesach laughed back.

'You can't,' Fanny said, shaking her large fond smile to and fro. 'By my health, not.'

'Ha! ha! ha! Can't even get *shikkur* on it. What a liquor!'

In the first Anglo-Jewish circles with which Pesach had scraped acquaintance, gingerbeer was the prevalent drink; and, generalizing almost as hastily as if he were going to write a book on the country, he concluded that it was the national beverage. He had long since discovered his mistake, but the drift of the discussion reminded Becky of a chance for an arrow.

'On the day when you sit for joy, Pesach,' she said slyly, 'I shall send you a valentine.'

Pesach coloured up, and those in the secret laughed. The reference was to another of Pesach's early ideas. Some mischievous gossip had heard him arguing with another 'greener' outside a stationer's shop blazing with comic valentines. The two foreigners were extremely puzzled to understand what these monstrosities portended. Pesach, however, laid it down that the microcephalous gentlemen with tremendous legs, and the ladies five-sixths head and one-sixth skirt, were representations of the English

peasants who lived in the little villages up country.

'When I sit for joy,' retorted Pesach, 'it will not be the season for valentines.'

'Won't it, though!' cried Becky, shaking her frizzy black curls. 'You'll be a pair of comic uns.'

'All right, Becky,' said Alte good-humouredly. 'Your turn'll come, and then we shall have the laugh of you.'

'Never,' said Becky. 'What do I want with a man?'

The arm of the specially-invited young man was round her as she spoke.

'Don't make *Schnecks*,' said Fanny.

'It's not affectation. I mean it. What's the good of the men who visit father? There isn't a gentleman among them.'

'Ah, wait till I win on the lotter*ee*,' said the special young man.

'Then, vy not take another eighth of a ticket?' inquired Sugarman the Shadchan, who seemed to spring from the other end of the room. He was one of the greatest Talmudists in London —a lean, hungry-looking man, sharp of feature and acute of intellect. 'Look at Mrs. Robinson —I've just won her over twenty pounds, and she only gave me two pounds for myself. I call it a *Cherpah*—a shame.'

'Yes, but you stole another two pounds,' said Becky.

'How do you know?' said Sugarman, startled.

Becky winked, and shook her head sapiently. 'Never *you* mind.'

The published list of the winning numbers was so complex in construction that Sugarman had ample opportunities of bewildering his clients.

'I von't sell you no more tickets,' said Sugarman, with righteous indignation.

'A fat lot I care,' said Becky, tossing her curls.

'Thou carest for nothing,' said Mrs. Belcovitch, seizing the opportunity for maternal admonition. 'Thou hast not even brought me my medicine to-night. Thou wilt find it on the chest of drawers in the bedroom.'

Beeky shook herself impatiently.

'I will go,' said the special young man.

'No; it is not beautiful that a young man shall go into my bedroom in my absence,' said Mrs. Belcovitch, blushing.

Becky left the room.

'Thou knowest,' said Mrs. Belcovitch, addressing herself to the special young man, 'I suffer greatly from my legs. One is a thick one, and one a thin one.'

The young man sighed sympathetically.

'Whence comes it?' he asked.

'Do I know? I was born so. My poor lambkin' (this was the way Mrs. Belcovitch always referred to her dead mother) 'had well-matched legs. If I had Aristotle's head I might be able to find out why my legs are inferior. And so one goes about!'

The reverence for Aristotle enshrined in Yiddish idiom is probably due to his being taken by the vulgar for a Jew. At any rate, the theory that Aristotle's philosophy was Jewish was advanced by the mediæval poet Jehuda Halevi, and sustained by Maimonides. The legend runs that when Alexander went to Palestine, Aristotle was in his train. At Jerusalem the philosopher had sight of King Solomon's manuscripts, and he forthwith edited them and put his name to them. But it is noteworthy that the story was only accepted by those Jewish scholars who adopted the Aristotelian philosophy, those who rejected it declaring that Aristotle in his last testament had admitted the inferiority of his writings to the Mosaic, and had asked that his works should be destroyed.

When Becky returned with the medicine, Mrs. Belcovitch mentioned that it was extremely nasty, and offered the young man a taste, whereat he rejoiced inwardly, knowing he had found favour in the sight of the parent. Mrs. Belcovitch paid a

penny a week to her doctor in sickness or health, so that there was a loss on being well. Becky used to fill up the bottles with water to save herself the trouble of going to fetch the medicine, but, as Mrs. Belcovitch did not know this, it made no difference.

'Thou livest too much indoors, Mrs. Kosminski,' said Mr. Sugarman, in Yiddish.

'Shall I march about in this weather—black and slippery, and the Angel going a-hunting ?'

'Ah!' said Mr. Sugarman, relapsing proudly into the vernacular ; 've English valk about in all vedders.'

Meanwhile, Moses Ansell had returned from evening service, and sat down, unquestioningly, by the light of an unexpected candle to his expected supper of bread and soup, blessing God for both gifts. The rest of the family had supped. Esther had put the two youngest children to bed (Rachel had arrived at years of independent undressing), and she and Solomon were doing home-lessons in copy-books, the candle saving them from a caning on the morrow. She held her pen clumsily, for several of her fingers were swathed in bloody rags lined with cobweb. The grandmother dozed in her chair. Everything was quiet and peaceful, though the atmosphere was chilly.

Moses ate his supper with a great smacking of

the lips and an equivalent enjoyment. When it was over he sighed deeply, and thanked God in a prayer lasting ten minutes, and delivered in a rapid, sing-song manner. He then inquired of Solomon whether he had said his evening prayer. Solomon looked out of the corners of his eyes at his *Bube*, and, seeing she was asleep on the bed, said he had, and kicked Esther significantly, but hurtfully, under the table.

'Then you had better say your night-prayer.'

There was no getting out of that, so Solomon finished his sum, writing the figures of the answer rather faint, in case he should discover from another boy next morning that they were wrong; then, producing a Hebrew prayer-book from his inky cotton satchel, he made a mumbling sound, with occasional enthusiastic bursts of audible coherence, for a length of time proportioned to the number of pages. Then he went to bed. After that Esther put her grandmother to bed, and curled herself up at her side. She lay awake a long time, listening to the quaint sounds emitted by her father in his study of Rashi's Commentary on the Book of Job, the measured drone blending not disagreeably with the far-away sounds of Pesach Weingott's fiddle.

Pesach's fiddle played the accompaniment to

many other people's thoughts. The respectable master-tailor sat behind his glazed shirt-front, beating time with his foot. His little sickly-looking wife stood by his side, nodding her bewigged head joyously. To both the music brought the same recollection—a Polish market-place.

Belcovitch, or rather Kosminski, was the only surviving son of a widow. It was curious, and suggestive of some grim law of heredity, that his parents' elder children had died off as rapidly as his own, and that his life had been preserved by some such expedient as Alte's. Only, in his case, the Rabbi consulted had advised his father to go into the woods and call his new-born son by the name of the first animal that he saw. This was why the future sweater was named Bear. To the death of his brothers and sisters Bear owed his exemption from military service. He grew up to be a stalwart, well-set-up young baker, a loss to the Russian army.

Bear went out into the market-place one fine day, and saw Chayah in maiden ringlets. She was a slim, graceful little thing, with nothing obviously odd about the legs, and was buying onions. Her back was towards him, but in another moment she turned her head and Bear's. As he caught the sparkle of her eye, he felt

that without her life were worse than the conscription. Without delay, he made inquiries about the fair young vision, and, finding its respectability unimpeachable, he sent a *Shadchan* to propose to her, and they were affianced, Chayah's father undertaking to give a dowry of two hundred gulden. Unfortunately, he died suddenly in the attempt to amass them, and Chayah was left an orphan. The two hundred gulden were nowhere to be found. Tears rained down both Chayah's cheeks, on the one side for the loss of her father, on the other for the prospective loss of a husband. The Rabbi was full of tender sympathy. He bade Bear come to the dead man's chamber. The venerable white-bearded corpse lay on the bed, swathed in shroud, and *Talith*, or praying-shawl.

'Bear,' he said, 'thou knowest that I saved thy life.'

'Nay,' said Bear; 'indeed I know not that.'

'Yea, of a surety,' said the Rabbi. 'Thy mother hath not told thee, but all thy brothers and sisters perished, and, lo! thou alone art preserved! It was I that called thee a beast.'

Bear bowed his head in grateful silence.

'Bear,' said the Rabbi, 'thou didst contract to wed this dead man's daughter, and he did contract to pay over to thee two hundred gulden.'

'Truth,' replied Bear.

'Bear,' said the Rabbi, 'there are no two hundred gulden.'

A shadow flitted across Bear's face, but he said nothing.

'Bear,' said the Rabbi again, 'there are not two gulden.'

Bear did not move.

'Bear,' said the Rabbi, 'leave thou my side, and go over to the other side of the bed, facing me.'

So Bear left his side and went over to the other side of the bed facing him.

'Bear,' said the Rabbi, 'give me thy right hand.'

The Rabbi stretched his own right hand across the bed, but Bear kept his obstinately behind his back.

'Bear,' repeated the Rabbi, in tones of more penetrating solemnity, 'give me thy right hand.'

'Nay,' replied Bear sullenly. 'Wherefore should I give thee my right hand?'

'Because,' said the Rabbi, and his tones trembled, and it seemed to him that the dead man's face grew sterner, 'because I wish thee to swear across the body of Chayah's father that thou wilt marry her.'

'Nay, that I will not!' said Bear.

'Will not?' repeated the Rabbi, his lips growing white with pity.

'Nay, I will not take any oaths,' said Bear hotly. 'I love the maiden, and I will keep what I have promised. But, by my father's soul, I will take no oaths!'

'Bear,' said the Rabbi in a choking voice, 'give me thy hand. Nay, not to swear by, but to grip. Long shalt thou live, and the Most High shall prepare thy seat in Gan Iden.'

So the old man and the young clasped hands across the corpse, and the simple old Rabbi perceived a smile flickering over the face of Chayah's father. Perhaps it was only a sudden glint of sunshine.

The wedding-day drew nigh, but lo! Chayah was again dissolved in tears.

'What ails thee?' said her brother Naphtali.

'I cannot follow the custom of the maidens,' wept Chayah. 'Thou knowest we are blood-poor, and I have not the wherewithal to buy my Bear a *Talith* for his wedding-day; nay, not even to make him a *Talith*-bag. And when our father (the memory of the righteous for a blessing) was alive, I had dreamed of making my *Chosan* a beautiful velvet satchel lined with silk, and I would have embroidered his initials thereon in gold, and sewn him beautiful white corpse-clothes. Perchance he will rely upon me for his

wedding *Talith*, and we shall be shamed in the sight of the congregation.'

'Nay, dry thine eyes, my sister,' said Naphtali. 'Thou knowest that my Leah presented me with a costly *Talith* when I led her under the canopy. Wherefore, do thou take my praying-shawl and lend it to Bear for the wedding-day, so that decency may be preserved in the sight of the congregation. The young man has a great heart, and he will understand.'

So Chayah, blushing prettily, lent Bear Naphtali's delicate *Talith*, and Beauty and the Beast made a rare couple under the wedding canopy. Chayah wore the gold medallion and the three rows of pearls which her lover had sent her the day before. And when the Rabbi had finished blessing husband and wife, Naphtali spake the bridegroom privily, and said :

'Pass me my *Talith* back.'

But Bear answered :

'Nay, nay ; the *Talith* is in my keeping, and there it shall remain.'

'But it is my *Talith*,' protested Naphtali in an angry whisper. 'I only lent it to Chayah to lend it thee.'

'It concerns me not,' Bear returned in a decisive whisper. 'The *Talith* is my due, and I shall keep it. What ! have I not lost enough by marrying thy sister ? Did not thy father—

peace be upon him !—promise me two hundred gulden with her ?'

Naphtali retired discomfited ; but he made up his mind not to go without some compensation. He resolved that during the progress of the wedding procession, conducting the bridegroom to the chamber of the bride, he would be the man to snatch off Bear's new hat. Let the rest of the riotous escort essay to snatch whatever other article of the bridegroom's attire they would, the hat was the easiest to dislodge, and he, Naphtali, would straightway reimburse himself partially with that. But the instant the procession formed itself, behold the shifty bridegroom forthwith removed his hat, and held it tightly under his arm.

A storm of protestations burst forth at this daring departure from hymeneal tradition.

'Nay, nay, put it on!' arose from every mouth.

But Bear closed his, and marched mutely on.

'Heathen!' cried the Rabbi. 'Put on your hat!'

The attempt to enforce the religious sanction failed too. Bear had spent several gulden upon his headgear, and could not see the joke. He plodded towards his blushing Chayah through a tempest of disapprobation.

Throughout life Bear Belcovitch retained the

contrariety of character that marked his matrimonial beginnings. He hated to part with money; he put off paying bills to the last moment, and he would even beseech his 'hands' to wait a day or two longer for their wages. He liked to feel that he had all that money in his possession. Yet 'at home,' in Poland, he had always lent money to the officers and gentry, when they ran temporarily short at cards. They would knock him up in the middle of the night to obtain the means of going on with the game. And in England he never refused to become surety for a loan when any of his poor friends begged the favour of him. These loans ran from three to five pounds, but whatever the amount, they were very rarely paid. The loan-offices came down upon him for the money. He paid it without a murmur, shaking his head compassionately over the poor ne'er-do-wells, and perhaps not without a compensating consciousness of superior practicality.

Only, if the borrower had neglected to treat him to a glass of rum to clench his signing as surety, the shake of Bear's head would become more reproachful than sympathetic, and he would mutter bitterly:

'Five pounds, and not even a drink for the money.'

The jewellery he generously lavished on his

womankind was in essence a mere channel of investment for his savings, avoiding the risks of a banking-account, and aggregating his wealth in a portable shape, in obedience to an instinct generated by centuries of insecurity. The interest on the sums thus invested was the gratification of the other Oriental instinct for gaudiness.

CHAPTER III.

MALKA.

THE Sunday Fair so long associated with Petticoat Lane is dying hard, and is still vigorous; its glories were in full swing on the dull gray morning when Moses Ansell took his way through the Ghetto. It was near eleven o'clock, and the throng was thickening momently. The vendors cried their wares in stentorian tones, and the babble of the buyers was like the confused roar of a stormy sea. The dead walls and hoardings were placarded with bills from which the life of the inhabitants could be constructed. Many were in Yiddish, the most hopelessly corrupt and hybrid jargon ever evolved. Even when the language was English the letters were Hebrew. Whitechapel, Public Meeting, Board School, Sermon, Police, and other modern banalities, glared at the passer-by in the sacred guise of the Tongue associated with miracles

and prophecies, palm-trees and cedars and seraphs, lions and shepherds and harpists.

Moses stopped to read these hybrid posters—he had nothing better to do—as he slouched along. He did not care to remember that dinner was due in two hours. He turned aimlessly into Wentworth Street, and studied a placard that hung in a bootmaker's window. This was the announcement it made in jargon :

'Riveters, Clickers, Lasters, Finishers,
Wanted.
BARUCH EMANUEL,
Cobbler,
Makes and Repairs Boots
Every Bit as Cheaply
as
MORDECAI SCHWARTZ,
of 12, Goulston Street.'

Mordecai Schwartz was written in the biggest and blackest of Hebrew letters, and quite dominated the little shop-window. Baruch Emanuel was visibly conscious of his inferiority to his powerful rival, though Moses had never heard of Mordecai Schwartz before. He entered the shop, and said in Hebrew, 'Peace be to you.' Baruch Emanuel, hammering a sole, answered in Hebrew :

'Peace be to you.'

Moses dropped into Yiddish.

'I am looking for work. Peradventure, have you something for me.'

'What can you do?'

'I have been a riveter.'

'I cannot engage any more riveters.'

Moses looked disappointed.

'I have also been a clicker,' he said.

'I have all the clickers I can afford,' Baruch answered.

Moses's gloom deepened.

'Two years ago I worked as a finisher.'

Baruch shook his head silently. He was annoyed at the man's persistence. There was only the laster resource left.

'And before that I was a laster for a week,' Moses answered.

'I don't want any!' cried Baruch, losing his temper.

'But in your window it stands that you do,' protested Moses feebly.

'I don't care what stands in my window,' said Baruch hotly. 'Have you not head enough to see that that is all bunkum? Unfortunately I work single-handed, but it looks good and it isn't lies. Naturally I want Riveters and Clickers and Lasters and Finishers. Then I could set up a big establishment and gouge out Mordecai Schwartz's eyes. But the Most High denies me assistants, and I am content to want.'

Moses understood that attitude towards the nature of things. He went out and wandered down another narrow dirty street in search of Mordecai Schwartz, whose address Baruch Emanuel had so obligingly given him. He thought of the Maggid's sermon on the day before. The Maggid had explained a verse of Habakkuk in quite an original way which gave an entirely new colour to a passage in Deuteronomy. Moses experienced acute pleasure in musing upon it, and went past Mordecai's shop without going in, and was only awakened from his day-dream by the brazen clanging of a bell. It was the bell of the great Ghetto school, summoning its pupils from the reeking courts and alleys, from the garrets and the cellars, calling them to come and be Anglicized. And they came—in a great straggling procession recruited from every lane and by-way: big children and little children; boys in blackening corduroy and girls in washed-out cotton; tidy children and ragged children; children in great shapeless boots gaping at the toes; sickly children and sturdy children and diseased children; bright-eyed children and hollow-eyed children; quaint sallow, foreign-looking children and fresh-coloured, English-looking children; with great pumpkin heads, with oval heads, with pear-shaped heads; with old men's faces, with

cherubs' faces, with monkeys' faces; cold and famished children and warm and well-fed children; children conning their lessons and children romping carelessly; the demure and the anæmic; the boisterous and the blackguardly, the insolent, the idiotic, the vicious, the intelligent, the exemplary, the dull—spawn of all countries—all hastening at the inexorable clang of the big school-bell to be ground in the same great, blind, inexorable Governmental machine. Here, too, was a miniature fair, the path being lined by itinerant temptations. There was brisk traffic in toffy and gray peas and monkey-nuts, and the crowd was swollen by anxious parents seeing tiny or truant offspring safe within the school-gates. The women were bareheaded or beshawled, with infants at their breasts and little ones toddling at their sides; the men were greasy, and musty, and squalid. Here a bright earnest little girl held her vagrant big brother by the hand, not to let go till she had seen him in the bosom of his class-mates. There a sullen wild-eyed mite in petticoats was being dragged along, screaming, towards distasteful durance. It was a drab picture—the bleak, leaden sky above, the sloppy, miry stones below, the frowzy mothers and fathers, the motley children.

'Monkey-nuts! Monkey-nuts!' croaked a wizened old woman.

'Oppea! Oppea!' droned a doddering old Dutchman.

He bore a great can of hot peas in one hand and a lighthouse-looking pepper-pot in the other. Some of the children swallowed the dainties hastily out of miniature basins, others carried them within in paper packets for surreptitious munching.

'Call that a ay-puth?' a small boy would say.

'Not enough!' the old man would exclaim in surprise. 'Here you are, then!'

And he would give the peas another sprinkling from the pepper-pot.

Moses Ansell's progeny were not in the picture. The younger children were at home; the elder had gone to school an hour before to run about and get warm in the spacious playgrounds. A slice of bread each and the wish-wash of a thrice-brewed pennyworth of tea had been their morning meal, and there was no prospect of dinner. The thought of them made Moses's heart heavy again; he forgot the Maggid's explanation of the verse in Habakkuk, and he retraced his steps towards Mordecai Schwartz's shop. But, like his humbler rival, Mordecai had no use for the many-sided Moses; he was 'full up' with swarthy 'hands,' though, as there were rumours of strikes in the air, he prudently took note of Moses's address. After this rebuff,

Moses shuffled hopelessly about for more than an hour; the dinner-hour was getting desperately near; already children passed him, carrying the Sunday dinners from the bakeries, and there were wafts of vague poetry in the atmosphere. Moses felt he could not face his own children.

At last he nerved himself to an audacious resolution, and elbowed his way blustrously towards the Ruins, lest he might break down if his courage had time to cool.

'The Ruins' was a great stony square, partly bordered by houses, and only picturesque on Sundays, when it became a branch of the all-ramifying Fair. Moses could have bought anything there, from elastic braces to green parrots in gilt cages—that is to say, if he had had money. At present he had nothing in his pocket except holes.

What he might be able to do on his way back was another matter. For it was Malka that Moses Ansell was going to see. She was the cousin of his deceased wife, and lived in Zachariah Square. Moses had not been there for a month, for Malka was a wealthy twig of the family tree, to be approached with awe and trembling. She kept a second-hand clothes store in Houndsditch, a supplementary stall in the Halfpenny Exchange, and a barrow on the 'Ruins' of a Sunday; and she had set up Ephraim, her newly-acquired

son-in-law, in the same line of business in the same district. Like most things she dealt in, her son-in-law was second-hand, having lost his first wife four years ago in Poland. But he was only twenty-two, and a second-hand son-in-law of twenty-two is superior to many brand-new ones.

The two domestic establishments were a few minutes away from the shops, facing each other diagonally across the square. They were small three-roomed houses, without basements, the ground-floor window in each being filled up with a black gauze blind (an invariable index of gentility) which allowed the occupants to see all that was passing outside, but confronted gazers with their own reflections. Passers-by postured at these mirrors, twisting moustaches perkily, or giving coquettish pats to bonnets, unwitting of the grinning inhabitants. Most of the doors were ajar, wintry as the air was, for the Zachariah Squareites lived a good deal on the door-step. In the summer the housewives sat outside on chairs, and gossiped and knitted, as if the sea foamed at their feet, and wrinkled, good-humoured old men played nap on tea-trays. Some of the doors were blocked below with sliding barriers of wood, a sure token of infants inside given to straying. More obvious tokens of child-life were the swings nailed to the lintels

of a few doors, in which, despite the cold, toothless babes swayed like monkeys on a branch. But the Square, with its broad area of quadrangular pavement, was an ideal playing-ground for children, since other animals came not within its precincts, except an inquisitive dog or a local cat. Solomon Ansell knew no greater privilege than to accompany his father to these fashionable quarters and whip his humming-top across the ample spaces, the while Moses transacted his business with Malka. Last time the business was psalm-saying. Milly had been brought to bed of a son, but it was doubtful if she would survive, despite the charms hung upon the bedpost to counteract the nefarious designs of Lilith, the wicked first wife of Adam, and of the Not-Good Ones who hover about women in childbirth. So Moses was sent for, post-haste, to intercede with the Almighty. His piety, it was felt, would command attention. For an average of three hundred and sixty-two days a year Moses was a miserable worm, a nonentity, but on the other three, when death threatened to visit Malka or her little clan, Moses became a personage of prime importance, and was summoned at all hours of the day and night to wrestle with the angel Azrael. When the angel had retired worsted, after a match sometimes protracted into days, Moses relapsed into his

primitive insignificance, and was dismissed with a mouthful of rum and a shilling. It never seemed to him an unfair equivalent, for nobody could make less demands on the universe than Moses. Give him two solid meals and three solid services a day, and he was satisfied, and he craved more for spiritual snacks between meals than for physical.

The last crisis had been brief, and there was so little danger that, when Milly's child was circumcised, Moses had not even been bidden to the feast, though his piety would have made him the ideal *Sandek*, or god-father. He did not resent this, knowing himself dust—and that anything but gold-dust.

Moses had hardly emerged from the little arched passage which led to the Square, when sounds of strife fell upon his ears. Two stout women, chatting amicably at their doors, had suddenly developed a dispute. In Zachariah Square, when you wanted to get to the bottom of a quarrel, the cue was not 'find the woman,' but find the child. The high-spirited bantlings had a way of pummelling one another in fistic duels, and of calling in their respective mothers when they got the worse of it—which is cowardly, but human. The mother of the beaten belligerent would then threaten to wring the 'year,' or to twist the nose, of the victorious party—sometimes she did

it. In either case, the other mother would intervene, and then the two bantlings would retire into the background, and leave their mothers to take up the duel, while they resumed their interrupted game.

Of such sort was the squabble betwixt Mrs. Isaacs and Mrs. Jacobs. Mrs. Isaacs pointed out with superfluous vehemence that her poor lamb had been mangled beyond recognition. Mrs. Jacobs, *per contra*, asseverated with superfluous gesture that it was her poor lamb who had received irreparable injury. These statements were not in mutual contradiction, but Mrs. Isaacs and Mrs. Jacobs were, and so the point at issue was gradually absorbed in more personal recriminations.

'By my life, and by my Fanny's life, I'll leave my seal on the first child of yours that comes across my way! There!' Thus Mrs. Isaacs.

'Lay a finger on a hair of a child of mine, and, by my husband's life, I'll summons you, I'll have the law on you!' Thus Mrs. Jacobs, to the gratification of the resident populace.

Mrs. Isaacs and Mrs. Jacobs rarely quarrelled with each other, uniting rather in opposition to the rest of the Square. They were English, quite English, their grandfather having been born in Dresden; and they gave themselves airs in consequence, and called their *Kinder* 'children,'

which annoyed those neighbours who found a larger admixture of Yiddish necessary for conversation. These very *Kinder*, again, attained considerable importance among their schoolfellows by refusing to pronounce the guttural 'ch' of the Hebrew otherwise than as an English 'k.'

'Summons me, indeed!' laughed back Mrs. Isaacs. 'A fat lot I'd care for that. You'd jolly soon expose your character to the magistrate. Everybody knows what *you* are!'

'Your mother!' retorted Mrs. Jacobs mechanically, the elliptical method of expression being greatly in vogue for conversation of a loud character. Quick as lightning came the parrying stroke.

'Yah! And what was your father, I should like to know!'

Mrs. Isaacs had no sooner made this inquiry than she became conscious of an environment of suppressed laughter; Mrs. Jacobs awoke to the situation a second later, and the two women stood suddenly dumfounded, petrified, with arms akimbo, staring at each other.

The wise if apocryphal Ecclesiasticus sagely and pithily remarked, many centuries before modern civilization was invented, 'Jest not with a rude man, lest thy ancestors be disgraced.' To this day the Oriental methods of insult have sur-

vived in the Ghetto. The dead past is never allowed to bury its dead; the genealogical dust-heap is always liable to be raked up, and even innocuous ancestors may be traduced to the third and fourth generation.

Now, it so happened that Mrs. Isaacs and Mrs. Jacobs were sisters. And when it dawned upon them into what dilemma their automatic methods of carte and tierce had inveigled them, they were frozen with confusion. They retired crestfallen to their respective parlours, and sported their oaks. The resources of repartee were dried up for the moment. Relatives are unduly handicapped in these verbal duels, especially relatives with the same mother and father.

Presently Mrs. Isaacs reappeared. She had thought of something she ought to have said. She went up to her sister's closed door, and shouted into the keyhole: 'None of my children ever had bandy-legs!'

Almost immediately the window of the front bedroom was flung up, and Mrs. Jacobs leant out of it waving what looked like an immense streamer.

'Aha!' she observed, dangling it tantalizingly up and down. 'Morry antique!'

The dress fluttered in the breeze. Mrs. Jacobs caressed the stuff between her thumb and forefinger.

'Aw-aw-aw-aw-aw-awl silk,' she announced with a long ecstatic quaver.

Mrs. Isaacs stood paralyzed by the brilliancy of the repartee.

Mrs. Jacobs withdrew the moiré antique and exhibited a mauve gown.

'Aw-aw-aw-aw-aw-awl silk.'

The mauve fluttered for a triumphant instant, the next a puce and amber dress floated on the breeze.

'Aw-aw-aw-aw-aw-awl silk.' Mrs. Jacobs's fingers smoothed it lovingly, then it was drawn within, to be instantly replaced by a green dress. Mrs. Jacobs passed the skirt slowly through her fingers. 'Aw-aw-aw-aw-aw-awl silk!' she quavered mockingly.

By this time Mrs. Isaacs's face was the colour of the latest flag of victory.

'The tallyman!' she tried to retort, but the words stuck in her throat. Fortunately just then she caught sight of her poor lamb playing with the other poor lamb. She dashed at her offspring, boxed its ears, and crying, 'You little blackguard, if I ever catch you playing with blackguards again I'll wring your neck for you,' she hustled the infant into the house, and slammed the door viciously behind her.

Moses had welcomed this every-day scene, for it put off for a few moments his encounter with

the formidable Malka. As she had not appeared at door or window, he concluded she was in a bad temper or out of London; neither alternative was pleasant.

He knocked at the door of Milly's house, where her mother was generally to be found, and an elderly charwoman opened it. There were some bottles of spirit standing on a wooden side-table covered with a coloured cloth, and some unopened biscuit-bags. At these familiar premonitory signs of a festival, Moses felt tempted to beat a retreat. He could not think for the moment what was up, but whatever it was he had no doubt the well-to-do persons would supply him with ice. The charwoman, with brow darkened by soot and gloom, told him that Milly was upstairs, but that her mother had gone across to her own house with the clothes-brush.

Moses's face fell. When his wife was alive, she had been a link of connection between 'The Family' and himself, her cousin having generously employed her as charwoman. So Moses knew the import of the clothes-brush. Malka was very particular about her appearance, and loved to be externally speckless, but somehow or other she had no clothes-brush at home. This deficiency did not matter ordinarily, for she practically lived at Milly's. But when she had words with Milly or her husband, she re-

tired to her own house to sulk or *schmull*, as they called it. The carrying away of the clothes-brush was, thus, a sign that she considered the breach serious, and hostilities likely to be protracted. Sometimes a whole week would go by without the two houses ceasing to stare sullenly across at each other, the situation in Milly's camp being aggravated by the lack of a clothes-brush. In such moments of irritation, Milly's husband was apt to declare that his mother-in-law had abundance of clothes-brushes, for, he pertinently asked, how did she manage during her frequent business tours in the country? He gave it as his conviction that Malka merely took the clothes-brush away to afford herself a handle for returning. But, then, Ephraim Phillips was a graceless young fellow, the death of whose first wife was probably a judgment on his levity, and everybody except his second mother-in-law knew that he had a book of tickets for the Oxbridge Music-Hall, and went there on Friday nights. Still, in spite of these facts, experience did show that whenever Milly's camp had outsulked Malka's, the old woman's surrender was always veiled under the formula of: 'Oh, Milly, I've brought you over your clothes-brush! I just noticed it, and thought you might be wanting it.' After this, conversation was comparatively easy.

Moses hardly cared to face Malka in such a crisis of the clothes-brush. He turned away despairingly, and was going back through the small archway which led to the Ruins and the outside world when a grating voice startled his ear.

'Well, Méshe, whither fliest thou? Has my Milly forbidden thee to see me?'

He looked back. Malka was standing at her house-door. He retraced his steps.

'N-n-o,' he murmured. 'I thought you still out with your stall.'

That was where she should have been, at any rate till half an hour ago. She did not care to tell herself, much less Moses, that she had been waiting at home for the envoy of peace from the filial camp summoning her to the ceremony of the Redemption of her grandson.

'Well, now thou seest me,' she said, speaking Yiddish for his behoof, 'thou lookest not outwardly anxious to know how it goes with me.'

'How goes it with you?'

'As well as an old woman has a right to expect. The Most High is good!' Malka was in her most amiable mood, to emphasize to outsiders the injustice of her kin in quarrelling with her. She was a tall woman of fifty, with a tanned equine gipsy face, sur-

mounted by a black wig, and decorated laterally by great gold earrings. Great black eyes blazed beneath great black eyebrows, and the skin between them was capable of wrinkling itself black with wrath. A gold chain was wound thrice round her neck, and looped up within her black silk bodice. There were numerous rings on her fingers, and she perpetually smelt of peppermint. '*Nu*, stand not chattering there,' she went on. 'Come in. Dost thou wish me to catch my death of cold?'

Moses slouched timidly within, his head bowed as if in dread of knocking against the top of the door. The room was a perfect facsimile of Milly's parlour at the other end of the diagonal, save that, instead of the festive bottles and paper bags on the small side-table, there was a cheerless clothes-brush. Like Milly's, the room contained a round table, a chest of drawers, with decanters on the top, and a high mantelpiece decorated with pendant green fringes, fastened by big-headed brass nails. Here cheap china dogs, that had had more than their day, squatted amid lustres with crystal drops. Before the fire was a lofty steel guard, which, useful enough in Milly's household, had survived its function in Malka's, where no one was ever likely to tumble into the grate. In a corner of the room a little staircase began to go upstairs. There was oil-

cloth on the floor. In Zachariah Square anybody could go into anybody else's house and feel at home. There was no visible difference between one and another. Moses sat down awkwardly on a chair, and refused a peppermint. In the end he accepted an apple, blessed God for creating the fruit of the tree, and made a ravenous bite at it.

'I must take peppermints,' Malka explained. 'It's for the spasms!'

'But you said you were well,' murmured Moses.

'And suppose? If I did not take peppermint I should have the spasms. My poor sister Rosina—peace be upon him!—who died of typhoid, suffered greatly from the spasms. It's in the family. She would have died of asthma if she had lived long enough. *Nu*, and how goes it with thee?' she went on, suddenly remembering that Moses, too, had a right to be ill. At bottom, Malka felt a real respect for Moses, though he did not know it. It dated from the day he cut a chip of mahogany out of her best round table. He had finished cutting his nails, and wanted a morsel of wood to burn with them, in witness of his fulfilment of the pious custom. Malka raged, but in her inmost heart there was admiration for such unscrupulous sanctity.

'I have been out of work for three weeks,'

Moses answered, omitting to expound the state of his health in view of more urgent matters.

'Unlucky fool! What my silly cousin Gittel —peace be upon him!—could see to marry in thee, I know not.'

Moses could not enlighten her. He might have informed her that *Olov Hasholom!* 'peace be upon him!' was an absurdity when applied to a woman; but then he used the pious phrase himself, although aware of its grammatical shortcomings.

'I told her thou wouldst never be able to keep her, poor lamb!' Malka went on. 'But she was always an obstinate pig. And she kept her head high up, too, as if she had five pounds a week! Never would let her children earn money like other people's children. But thou oughtest not to be so obstinate. Thou shouldst have more sense, Méshe; *thou* belongest not to my family. Why can't Solomon go out with matches?'

'Gittel's soul would not like it.'

'But the living have bodies! Thou rather seest thy children starve than work. There's Esther—an idle, lazy brat, always reading story-books; why doesn't she sell flowers or pull out bastings in the evening?'

'Esther and Solomon have their lessons to do.'

'Lessons!' snorted Malka. 'What's the good

of lessons? It's English, not Judaism, they teach them in that godless school. I could never read or write anything but Hebrew in all my life; but, God be thanked, I have thriven without it. All they teach them in the school is English nonsense. The teachers are a pack of heathens, who eat forbidden things; but the good Yiddishkeit goes to the wall. I'm ashamed of thee, Méshe; thou dost not even send thy boys to a Hebrew class in the evening.'

'I have no money, and they must do their English lessons; else, perhaps, their clothes will be stopped. Besides, I teach them myself every Shabbos afternoon and Sunday. Solomon translates into Yiddish the whole Pentateuch with Rashi.'

'Yes, he may know *Térah*,' said Malka, not to be baffled; 'but he'll never know *Gemorah* or *Mishnayis*.'

Malka herself knew very little of these abstruse subjects beyond their names, and the fact that they were studied out of minutely-printed folios by men of extreme sanctity.

'He knows a little *Gemorah*, too,' said Moses. 'I can't teach him at home, because I haven't got a *Gemorah*—it's so expensive, as you know. But he went with me to the Beth-Medrash, when the Maggid was studying it with a class free of charge, and we learnt the whole of the

Tractate *Niddah*. Solomon understands very well all about the Divorce Laws, and he could adjudicate on the duties of women to their husbands.'

'Ah, but he'll never know *Cabulah*,' said Malka, driven to her last citadel. 'But, then, no one in England can study *Cabulah* since the days of Rabbi Falk (the memory of the righteous for a blessing), any more than a born Englishman can learn Talmud. There's something in the air that prevents it. In my town there was a Rabbi who could do *Cabulah*; he could call Abraham our father from the grave. But in this pig-eating country no one can be holy enough for the Name—blessed be It!—to grant him the privilege. I don't believe the *Shochetim* kill the animals properly; the statutes are violated; even pious people eat *tripha* cheese and butter. I don't say thou dost, Méshe, but thou lettest thy children.'

'Well, your own butter is not *kosher*,' said Moses, nettled.

'My butter? What does it matter about my butter? I never set up for a purist. I don't come of a family of Rabbonim. I'm only a business woman. It's the *froom* people that I complain of—the people who ought to set an example, and are lowering the standard of *Froomkeit*. I caught a beadle's wife the other

day washing her meat and butter plates in the same bowl of water. In time they will be frying steaks in butter, and they will end by eating *tripha* meat out of butter-plates, and the judgment of God will come. But what is become of thine apple? Thou hast not gorged it already?'

Moses nervously pointed to his trousers-pocket, bulged out by the mutilated globe. After his first ravenous bite, Moses had bethought himself of his responsibilities.

'It's for the *Kinder*,' he explained.

'*Nu*, the *Kinder!*' snorted Malka disdainfully. 'And what will they give thee for it? Verily, not a thank you. In my young days we trembled before the father and the mother, and my mother—peace be upon him!—*potched* my face after I was a married woman. I shall never forget that slap—it nearly made me adhere to the wall. But nowadays our children sit on our heads. I gave my Milly all she has in the world—a house, a shop, a husband, and my best bed-linen. And now, when I want her to call the child Yosef, after my first husband—peace be on him!—her own father, she would, out of sheer vexatiousness, call it Yechezkel.'

Malka's voice became more strident than ever. She had been anxious to make a species of vicarious reparation to her first husband, and

the failure of Milly to acquiesce in the arrangement was a source of real vexation.

Moses could think of nothing better to say than to inquire how her present husband was.

'He overworks himself,' Malka replied, shaking her head. 'The misfortune is that he thinks himself a good man of business, and he is always starting new enterprises without consulting me. If he would only take my advice more!'

Moses shook his head in sympathetic deprecation of Michael Birnbaum's wilfulness.

'Is he at home?' he asked.

'No, but I expect him back from the country every minute. I believe they have invited him for the *Pidyun Haben* to-day.'

'Oh, is that to-day?'

'Of course. Didst thou not know?'

'No; no one told me.'

'Thine own sense should have told thee. Is it not the thirty-first day since the birth? But of course he won't accept when he knows that my own daughter has driven me out of her house.'

'You say not!' exclaimed Moses in horror.

'I do say,' said Malka, unconsciously taking up the clothes-brush and thumping with it on the table to emphasize the outrage. 'I told her that when Yechezkel cried so much it would be better to look for the pin than to dose the child

for gripes. "I dressed it myself, mother," says she. "Thou art an obstinate cat's head, Milly," says I. "I say there *is* a pin." "And I know better," says she. "How canst thou know better than I?" says I. "Why, I was a mother before thou wast born." So I unrolled the child's flannel, and sure enough underneath it, just over the stomach, I found——'

'The pin,' concluded Moses, shaking his head gravely.

'No, not exactly. But a red mark where the pin had been pricking the poor little thing.'

'And what did Milly say then?' said Moses, in sympathetic triumph.

'Milly insisted it was a flea-bite; and I said, "Gott in Himmel, Milly, dost thou want to swear my eyes away? My enemies shall have such a flea-bite." And because Red Rivkah was in the room, Milly said I was shedding her blood in public, and she began to cry as if I had committed a crime against her in looking after her child. And I rushed out, leaving the two babies howling together. That was a week ago.'

'And how is the child?'

'How should I know? I am only the grandmother. I only supplied the bed-linen it was born on.'

'But is it recovered from the circumcision?'

'Oh yes; all our family have good healing flesh. It's a fine child, *imbeshreer*. It's got my eyes and nose. It's a rare handsome baby, *imbeshreer*. Only it won't be its mother's fault if the Almighty takes it not back again. Milly has picked up so many ignorant Lane women, who come in and blight the child by admiring it aloud, not even saying *imbeshreer*. And then there's an old witch, a beggar-woman that Ephraim, my son-in-law, used to give a shilling a week to. Now he only gives her ninepence. She asked him "Why?" and he said, "I'm married now. I can't afford more." "What!" she shrieked; "you got married on my money!" And one Friday, when the nurse had baby downstairs, the old beggar-woman knocked for her weekly allowance, and opened the door, and she saw the child, and she looked at it with her Evil Eye! I hope to Heaven nothing will come of it!'

'I will pray for Yechezkel,' said Moses.

'Pray for Milly also while thou art about it, that she may remember what is owing to a mother before the earth covers me. I don't know what's coming over children. Look at my Leah. She *will* marry that Sam Levine, though he belongs to a lax English family, and I suspect his mother was a proselyte. She can't fry fish, any way. I don't say anything against

Sam, but still I do think my Leah might have told me before falling in love with him. And yet, see how I treat them! My Michael made a *Missheberach* for them in synagogue the Sabbath after the engagement; not a common eighteen-penny benediction, but a guinea one, with half-crown blessings thrown in for his parents and the congregation, and a gift of five shillings to the minister. That was, of course, in our own *Chevrah*, not reckoning the guinea my Michael *shnodared* at Duke's Plaizer *Shool*. You know, we always keep two seats at Duke's Plaizer as well.'

Duke's Plaizer was the current distortion of Duke's Place.

'What magnanimity!' said Moses, over-awed.

'I like to do everything with decorum,' said Malka. 'No one can say I have ever acted otherwise than as a fine person. I dare say thou couldst do with a few shillings thyself now.'

Moses hung his head still lower.

'You see, my mother is so poorly,' he stammered. 'She is a very old woman, and without anything to eat she may not live long.'

'They ought to take her into the Aged Widows' Home. I'm sure I gave her *my* votes.'

'God shall bless you for it. But people say I

was lucky enough to get my Benjamin into the Orphan Asylum, and that I ought not to have brought her from Poland. They say we grow enough poor old widows here.'

'People say quite right—at least, she would have starved in a Yiddishë country, not in a land of heathens.'

'But she was lonely and miserable out there, exposed to all the malice of the Christians. And I was earning a pound a week. Tailoring was a good trade then. The few roubles I used to send her did not always reach her.'

'Thou hadst no right to send her anything, nor to send for her. Mothers are not everything. Thou didst marry my cousin Gittel—peace be upon him!—and it was thy duty to support *her* and her children. Thy mother took the bread out of the mouth of Gittel, and but for her my poor cousin might have been alive to-day. Believe me, it was no *Mitzvah*.'

Mitzvah is a 'portmanteau-word.' It means a commandment and a good deed, the two conceptions being regarded as interchangeable.

'Nay, thou errest there,' answered Moses. 'Gittel was not a phœnix, which alone ate not of the Tree of Knowledge and so lives for ever. Women have no need to live as long as men, for they have not so many *Mitzvahs* to perform as men and inasmuch as'—here his tones involun-

tarily assumed the argumentative sing-song—'their souls profit by all the *Mitzvahs* performed by their husbands and children, Gittel will profit by the *Mitzvah* I did in bringing over my mother, so that even if she did die through it, she will not be the loser thereby. It stands in the Verse that *man* shall do the *Mitzvahs* and live by them. To live is a *Mitzvah*, but it is plainly one of those *Mitzvahs* that have to be done at a definite time, from which species women, by reason of their household duties, are exempt; wherefore I would deduce by another circuit that it is not so incumbent upon women to live as upon men. Nevertheless, if God had willed it, she would have been still alive. The Holy One—blessed be He!—will provide for the little ones He has sent into the world. He fed Elijah the prophet by ravens, and He will never send me a black Sabbath.'

'Oh, you are a saint, Méshe!' said Malka, so impressed that she admitted him to the equality of the second person plural. 'If everybody knew as much *Térah* as you the Messiah would soon be here. Here are five shillings. For five shillings you can get a basket of lemons in the Orange Market in Duke's Place, and if you sell them in the Lane at a halfpenny each, you will make a good profit. Put aside five shillings of your takings and get another basket, and so you

will be able to live till the tailoring picks up a bit.'

Moses listened as if he had never heard of the elementary principles of barter.

'May the Name—blessed be It!—bless you, and may you see rejoicings on your children's children!'

So Moses went away and bought dinner, treating his children to some *Beuglich*, or circular twisted rolls, in his joy. But on the morrow he repaired to the Market, thinking on the way of the ethical distinction between 'duties of the heart' and 'duties of the limbs,' as expounded in choice Hebrew by Rabbenu Bachja, and he laid out the remnant in lemons. Then he stationed himself in Petticoat Lane, crying, in his imperfect English, 'Lemans, verra good lemans, two a penny each, two a penny each!'

CHAPTER IV.

THE REDEMPTION OF THE SON AND THE DAUGHTER.

MALKA did not have long to wait for her liege lord. He was a fresh-coloured young man of thirty, rather good-looking, with side-whiskers, keen, eager glance, and an air of perpetually doing business. Though a native of Germany, he spoke English as well as many Lane Jews whose comparative impiety was a certificate of British birth. Michael Birnbaum was a great man in the local little synagogue, if only one of the crowd at 'Duke's Plaizer.' He had been successively *Gabbai* and *Parnass*, or treasurer and president, and had presented the plush curtain, with its mystical decoration of intersecting triangles, woven in silk, that hung before the Ark in which the scrolls of the Law were kept. He was the very antithesis of Moses Ansell. His energy was restless. From hawking he had risen to a profitable traffic in gold

lace and Brummagem jewellery, with a large *clientèle* all over the country, before he was twenty. He touched nothing which he did not profit by; and when he married, at twenty-three, a woman nearly twice his age, the transaction was not without the usual percentage. Very soon his line was diamonds—real diamonds. He carried a pocket-knife which was a combination of a corkscrew, a pair of scissors, a file, a pair of tweezers, a tooth-pick, and half a dozen other things, and which seemed an epitome of his character. His temperament was lively, and, like Ephraim Phillips, he liked music-halls. Fortunately, Malka was too conscious of her charms to dream of jealousy.

Michael smacked her soundly on the mouth with his lips, and said: 'Well, mother!'

He called her mother, not because he had any children, but because she had, and it seemed a pity to multiply domestic nomenclature.

'Well, my little one,' said Malka, hugging him fondly. 'Have you made a good journey this time?'

'No, trade is so dull. People won't put their hands in their pockets. And here?'

'People won't take their hands out of their pockets, lazy dogs! Everybody is striking—Jews with them. Unheard-of things! The bootmakers, the cap-makers, the furriers! And

now they say the tailors are going to strike; more fools, too, when the trade is so slack! What with one thing and another (let me put your cravat-pin straight, my little love!), it's just the people who can't afford to buy new clothes that are hard up, so that they can't afford to buy second-hand clothes either. If the Almighty is not good to us, we shall come to the Board of Guardians ourselves.'

'Not quite so bad as that, mother,' laughed Michael, twirling the massive diamond ring on his finger. 'How's baby? Is it ready to be redeemed?'

'Which baby?' said Malka, with well-affected agnosticism.

'Phew!' whistled Michael. 'What's up now, mother?'

'Nothing, my pet, nothing.'

'Well, I'm going across. Come along, mother. Oh, wait a minute. I want to brush this mud off my trousers. Is the clothes-brush here?'

'Yes, dearest one,' said the unsuspecting Malka.

Michael winked imperceptibly, flicked his trousers, and without further parley ran across the diagonal to Milly's house. Five minutes afterwards a deputation, consisting of the char-woman, waited upon Malka, and said:

'Missus says will you please come over, as baby is a-cryin' for its grandma.'

'Ah, that must be another pin,' said Malka, with a gleam of triumph at her victory. But she did not budge. At the end of five minutes she rose solemnly, adjusted her wig and her dress in the mirror, put on her bonnet, brushed away a non-existent speck of dust from her left sleeve, put a peppermint in her mouth, and crossed the Square, carrying the clothes-brush in her hand. Milly's door was half open, but she knocked at it, and said to the charwoman:

'Is Mrs. Phillips in?'

'Yes, mum, the company's all upstairs.'

'Oh, then I will go up and return her this myself.'

Malka went straight through the little crowd of guests to Milly, who was sitting on a sofa with Ezekiel, quiet as a lamb and as good as gold, in her arms.

'Milly, my dear,' she said; 'I have come to bring you back your clothes-brush. Thank you so much for the loan of it.'

'You know you're welcome, mother,' said Milly, with unintentionally dual significance. The two ladies embraced. Ephraim Phillips, a sallow-looking, close-cropped Pole, also kissed his mother-in-law, and the gold chain that rested on Malka's bosom heaved with the expansion of

domestic pride. Malka thanked God she was not a mother of barren or celibate children, which is only one degree better than personal unfruitfulness, and testifies scarce less to the celestial curse.

'Is that pin-mark gone away yet, Milly, from the precious little thing?' said Malka, taking Ezekiel in her arms, and disregarding the transformation of face which in babies precedes a storm.

'Yes, it was a mere flea-bite,' said Milly incautiously, adding hurriedly, 'I always go through his flannels and things most carefully to see there are no more pins lurking about.'

'That is right! Pins are like fleas—you never know where they get to,' said Malka in an insidious spirit of compromise. 'Where is Leah?'

'She is in the back-yard frying the last of the fish. Don't you smell it?'

'It will hardly have time to get cold.'

'Well, but I did a dishful myself last night. She is only preparing a reserve in case the attack be too deadly.'

'And where is the *Cohen?*'

'Oh, we have asked old Hyams across the Ruins. We expect him round every minute.'

At this point the indications of Ezekiel's facial

barometer were fulfilled, and a tempest of weeping shook him.

'*Na!* Go then! Go to the mother!' said Malka angrily. 'All my children are alike. It's getting late. Hadn't you better send across again for old Hyams?'

'There's no hurry, mother,' said Michael Birnbaum soothingly. 'We must wait for Sam.'

'And who's Sam?' cried Malka unappeased.

'Sam is Leah's *Chosan*,' replied Michael ingenuously.

'Clever!' sneered Malka. 'But my grandson is not going to wait for the son of a proselyte. Why doesn't he come?'

'He'll be here in one minute.'

'How do you know?'

'We came up in the same train. He got in at Middlesborough. He's just gone home to see his folks, and get a wash and a brush-up. Considering he's coming up to town merely for the sake of the family ceremony, I think it would be very rude to commence without him. It's no joke, a long railway journey this weather. My feet were nearly frozen, despite the foot-warmer.'

'My poor lambkin!' said Malka, melting. And she patted his side-whiskers.

Sam Levine arrived almost immediately, and Leah, fishfork in hand, flew out of the back-yard

kitchen to greet him. Though a member of the tribe of Levi, he was anything but ecclesiastical in appearance, rather a representative of muscular Judaism. He had a pink-and-white complexion and a tawny moustache, and bubbled over with energy and animal spirits. He could give most men thirty in a hundred in billiards, and fifty in anecdote. He was an advanced Radical in politics, and had a high opinion of the intelligence of his party. He paid Leah lip-fealty on his entry.

'What a pity it's Sunday!' was Leah's first remark when the kissing was done.

'No going to the play,' said Sam ruefully, catching her meaning.

They always celebrated his return from a commercial round by going to the theatre—'the-etter' they pronounced it. They went to the pit of the West End houses rather than patronize the local dress-circles for the same money. There were two strata of Ghetto girls: those who strolled in the Strand on Sabbath, and those who strolled in the Whitechapel Road. Leah was of the upper stratum. She was a tall lovely brunette, exuberant of voice and figure, with coarse red hands. She doted on ice-cream in the summer, and hot chocolate in the winter, but her love of the theatre was a perennial passion. Both Sam and she had good ears, and

were always first in the field with the latest comic opera tunes. Leah's healthy vitality was prodigious. There was a legend in the Lane of such a maiden having been chosen by a coronet; Leah was satisfied with Sam, who was just her match. On the heels of Sam came several other guests, notably Mrs. Jacobs (wife of 'Reb' Shemuel), with her pretty daughter, Hannah. Mr. Hyams, the *Cohen*, came last—the Priest whose functions had so curiously dwindled since the times of the Temples. To be called first to the reading of the Law, to bless his brethren with symbolic spreadings of palms and fingers in a mystic incantation delivered standing shoeless before the Ark of the Covenant at festival seasons, to redeem the mother's first-born son when neither parent was of priestly lineage—these privileges, combined with a disability to be with or near the dead, differentiated his religious position from that of the Levite or the Israelite. Mendel Hyams was not puffed up about his tribal superiority, though, if tradition were to be trusted, his direct descent from Aaron, the High Priest, gave him a longer genealogy than Queen Victoria's. He was a meek sexuagenarian, with a threadbare black coat and a child-like smile. All the pride of the family seemed to be monopolised by his daughter Miriam, a girl whose very nose Heaven had fashioned scornful. Miriam had

accompanied him out of contemptuous curiosity. She wore a stylish feather in her hat, and a boa round her throat, and earned thirty shillings a week, all told, as a school teacher. (Esther Ansell was in her class just now.) Probably her toilette had made old Hyams unpunctual. His arrival was the signal for the commencement of the proceedings, and the men hastened to assume their head-gear.

Ephraim Phillips cautiously took the swaddled-up infant from the bosom of Milly, where it was suckling, and presented it to old Hyams. Fortunately Ezekiel had already had a repletion of milk, and was drowsy and manifested very little interest in the whole transaction.

'This, my first-born son,' said Ephraim in Hebrew as he handed Ezekiel over—'is the first-born of his mother, and the Holy One—blessed be He!—hath given command to redeem him, as it is said, and those that are to be redeemed of them from a month old shalt thou redeem according to thine estimation for the money of five shekels after the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel being twenty gerahs: and it is said, "Sanctify unto Me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast; it is Mine."'

Ephraim Phillips then placed fifteen shillings

in silver before old Hyams, who thereupon inquired in Chaldaic :

'Which wouldst thou rather—give me thy first-born son, the first-born of his mother, or redeem him for five selaim, which thou art bound to give according to the Law?'

Ephraim replied in Chaldaic :

'I am desirous rather to redeem my son, and here thou hast the value of his redemption, which I am bound to give according to the Law.'

Thereupon Hyams took the money tendered, and gave back the child to his father, who blessed God for His sanctifying commandments, and thanked Him for His mercies; after which the old *Cohen* held the fifteen shillings over the head of the infant, saying: 'This instead of that, this in exchange for that, this in remission of that. May this child enter into life, into the Law, and into the fear of Heaven! May it be God's will that even as he has been admitted to redemption, so may he enter into the Law, the nuptial canopy, and into good deeds! Amen.' Then, placing his hand in benediction upon the child's head, the priestly layman added: 'God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh. The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord turn His face to thee and grant thee peace.

The Lord is thy guardian; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. For length of days and years of life and peace shall they add to thee. The Lord shall guard thee from all evil. He shall guard thy soul.'

'Amen,' answered the company, and then there was a buzz of secular talk, general rapture being expressed at the stolidness of Ezekiel's demeanour. Cups of tea were passed round by the lovely Leah, and the secrets of the paper bags were brought to light. Ephraim Phillips talked horses with Sam Levine, and old Hyams quarrelled with Malka over the disposal of the fifteen shillings. Knowing that Hyams was poor, Malka refused to take back the money, re-tendered by him under pretence of a gift to the child. The *Cohen*, however, was a proud man, and under the eye of Miriam a firm one. Ultimately it was agreed the money should be expended on a *Missheberach*, for the infant's welfare and the synagogue's. Birds of a feather flock together, and Miriam forgathered with Hannah Jacobs, who also had a stylish feather in her hat, and was the most congenial of the company. Mrs. Jacobs was left to discourse of the ailments of childhood and the iniquities of servants with Mrs. Phillips. Reb Shemuel's wife, commonly known as the Rebbitzin, was a tall woman with a bony nose and shrivelled cheeks, whereon the paths of the

bloodvessels were scrawled in red. The same bones were visible beneath the plumper padding of Hannah's face. Mrs. Jacobs had escaped the temptation to fatness, which is the besetting peril of the Jewish matron. If Hannah could escape her mother's inclination to angularity she would be a pretty woman. She dressed with taste, which is half the battle, and for the present she was only nineteen.

'Do you think it's a good match?' said Miriam Hyams, indicating Sam Levine with a movement of the eyebrow.

A swift, scornful look flitted across Hannah's face. 'Among the Jews,' she said, 'every match is a grand *Shidduch* before the marriage; after, we hear another tale.'

'There is a good deal in that,' admitted Miriam thoughtfully. 'The girl's family cries up the capture shamelessly. I remember, when Clara Emanuel was engaged, her brother Jack told me it was a splendid *Shidduch*. Afterwards I found he was a widower of fifty-five with three children.'

'But that engagement went off,' said Hannah.

'I know,' said Miriam. 'I'm only saying I can't fancy myself doing anything of the kind.'

'What! breaking off an engagement?' said Hannah, with a cynical little twinkle about her eye.

'No; taking a man like that,' replied Miriam.

'I wouldn't look at a man over thirty-five, or with less than two hundred and fifty a year.'

'You'll never marry a teacher, then,' Hannah remarked.

'Teacher!' Miriam Hyams repeated, with a look of disgust. 'How can one be respectable on three pounds a week? I must have a man in a good position.' She tossed her piquant nose and looked almost handsome. She was five years older than Hannah, and it seemed an enigma why men did not rush to lay five pounds a week at her daintily shod feet.

'I'd rather marry a man with two pounds a week, if I loved him,' said Hannah, in a low tone.

'Not in this century,' said Miriam, shaking her head incredulously. 'We don't believe in that nonsense nowadays. There was Alice Green—she used to talk like that: now look at her, riding about in a gig side by side with a bald monkey.'

'Alice Green's mother,' interrupted Malka, pricking up her ears, 'married a son of Mendel Weinstein by his third wife, Dinah, who had ten pounds left her by her uncle Shloumi.'

'No, Dinah was Mendel's second wife,' corrected Mrs. Jacobs, cutting short a remark of Mrs. Phillips's in favour of the new interest.

'Dinah was Mendel's third wife,' repeated

Malka, her tanned cheeks reddening. 'I know it because my Simon—God bless him!—was breeched the same month.'

Simon was Malka's eldest, now a magistrate in Melbourne.

'His third wife was Kitty Green, daughter of the yellow Melammed,' persisted the Rebbitzin. 'I know it for a fact, because Kitty's sister Annie was engaged for a week to my brother-in-law Nathaniel.'

'His first wife,' put in Malka's husband, with the air of arbitrating between the two, 'was Shmool, the publican's eldest daughter.'

'Shmool, the publican's daughter,' said Malka, stirred to fresh indignation, 'married Hyam Robins, the grandson of old Benjamin, who kept the cutlery shop at the corner of Little Eden Alley, there where the pickled cucumber store stands now.'

'It was Shmool's sister that married Hyam Robins, wasn't it, mother?' asked Milly incautiously.

'Certainly not,' thundered Malka. 'I knew old Benjamin well, and he sent me a pair of chintz curtains when I married your father.'

'Poor old Benjamin! How long has he been dead?' mused Reb Shemuel's wife.

'He died the year I was confined with my Leah——'

'Stop! stop!' interrupted Sam Levine boisterously. 'There's Leah getting as red as fire for fear you'll blab out her age.'

'Don't be a fool, Sam!' said Leah, blushing violently, and looking the lovelier for it.

The attention of the entire company was now concentrated upon the question at issue, whatever it might be. Malka fixed her audience with her piercing eye, and said in a tone that scarce brooked contradiction:

'Hyam Robins couldn't have married Shmool's sister, because Shmool's sister was already the wife of Abraham the fishmonger.'

'Yes, but Shmool had two sisters,' said Mrs. Jacobs, audaciously asserting her position as the rival genealogist.

'Nothing of the kind,' replied Malka warmly.

'I'm quite sure,' persisted Mrs. Jacobs. 'There was Phœby, and there was Harriet.'

'Nothing of the kind,' repeated Malka. 'Shmool had three sisters. Only two were in the deaf and dumb home.'

'Why, that wasn't Shmool at all,' Milly forgot herself so far as to say; 'that was Block, the baker.'

'Of course,' said Malka in her most acid tone. 'My *Kinder* always know better than me.'

There was a moment of painful silence. Malka's eye mechanically sought the clothes-

brush. Then Ezekiel sneezed. It was a convulsive 'atichoo,' and agitated the infant to its most intimate flannel roll.

'For Thy salvation do I hope, O Lord,' murmured Malka piously, adding triumphantly aloud: 'There! the *Kind* has sneezed to the truth of it. I knew I was right!'

The sneeze of an innocent child silences everybody who is not a blasphemer. In the general satisfaction at the unexpected solution of the situation, no one even pointed out that the actual statement to which Ezekiel had borne testimony was an assertion of the superior knowledge of Malka's children. Shortly afterwards the company trooped downstairs to partake of high tea, which in the Ghetto need not include anything more fleshly than fish. Fish was, indeed, the staple of the meal. Fried fish, and such fried fish! Only a great poet could sing the praises of the national dish, and the golden age of Hebrew poetry is over. Strange that Gebirol should have lived and died without the opportunity of the theme, and that the great Jehuda Halevi himself should have had to devote his genius merely to singing the glories of Jerusalem. 'Israel is among the other nations,' he sang, 'as the heart among the limbs.' Even so is the fried fish of Judea to the fried fish of Christendom and Heathendom.

With the audacity of true culinary genius, Jewish fried fish is always served cold. The skin is a beautiful brown, the substance firm and succulent. The very bones thereof are full of marrow; yea, and charged with memories of the happy past. Fried fish binds Anglo-Judea more than all the lip-professions of unity. Its savour is early known of youth, and the divine flavour, endeared by a thousand childish recollections, entwined with the most sacred associations, draws back the hoary sinner into the paths of piety. It is on fried fish, mayhap, that the Jewish matron grows fat. In the days of the Messiah, when the saints shall feed off the Leviathan, and the Sea Serpent shall be dished up for the last time, and the world and the silly season shall come to an end, in those days it is probable that the saints will prefer their Leviathan fried. Not that any physical frying will be necessary, for in those happy times (for whose coming every faithful Israelite prays three times a day) the Leviathan will have what taste the eater will. Possibly a few highly respectable saints, who were fashionable in their day, and contrived to live in Kensington without infection of paganism, will take their Leviathan in conventional courses, and beginning with *hors d'œuvres* may *will* him everything by turns and nothing long; making him soup and sweets,

joint and *entrée*, and even ices and coffee, for in the millennium the harassing prohibition which bars cream after meat will fall through. But, however this be, it is beyond question that the bulk of the faithful will mentally fry him; and though the Christian saints, who shall be privileged to wait at table, hand them plate after plate, fried fish shall be all the fare. One suspects that the Hebrew gained the taste in the Desert of Sinai, for the manna that fell there was not monotonous to the palate as the sciolist supposes, but likewise mutable under volition. It were incredible that Moses, who gave so many imperishable things to his people, did not also give them the knowledge of fried fish, so that they might obey his behest, and rejoice before the Lord. Nay, was it not because, while the manna fell, there could be no lack of fish to fry, that they lingered forty years in a dreary wilderness?

Other delicious things there are in Jewish cookery—*Lockschen*, which are the apotheosis of vermicelli; *Ferfel*, which are *Lockschen* in an atomic state; and *Creplich*, which are triangular meat pasties; and *Kuggol*, to which pudding has a far-away resemblance; and there is even *gefüllte Fisch*, which is stuffed fish without bones—but fried fish reigns above all in cold, unquestioned sovereignty. No other people

possesses the recipe. As a poet of the commencement of the century sings :

> 'The Christians are ninnies, they can't fry Dutch plaice,
> Believe me, they can't tell a carp from a dace.'

It was while discussing a deliciously brown oblong of the Dutch plaice of the ballad that Samuel Levine appeared to be struck by an idea. He threw down his knife and fork, and exclaimed in Hebrew :

'*Shemah beni!*'

Everyone looked at him.

'Hear, my son!' he repeated in comic horror. Then relapsing into English, he explained. 'I've forgotten to give Leah a present from her *Chosan.*'

'A-h-h !'

Everybody gave a sigh of deep interest. Leah, whom the exigencies of service had removed from his side to the head of the table, half rose from her seat in excitement.

Now, whether Samuel Levine had really forgotten, or whether he had chosen the most effective moment, will never be known ; certain it is that the Semitic instinct for drama was gratified within him as he drew a little folded white paper out of his waistcoat pocket, amid the keen expectation of the company.

'This,' said he, tapping the paper as if he

were a conjurer, 'was purchased by me yesterday morning for my little girl. I said to myself, says I, "Look here, old man, you've got to go up to town for a day in honour of Ezekiel Phillips, and your poor girl, who had looked forward to your staying away till Passover, will want some compensation for her disappointment at seeing you earlier." So I thinks to myself, thinks I, "Now what is there that Leah would like? It must be something appropriate, of course, and it mustn't be of any value, because I can't afford it." It's a ruinous business getting engaged, the worst bit of business I ever did in all my born days.' Here Sam winked facetiously at the company. 'And I thought and thought of what was the cheapest thing I could get out of it with, and, lo and behold! I suddenly thought of a ring.'

So saying, Sam, still with the same dramatic air, unwrapped the thick gold ring and held it up so that the huge diamond in it sparkled in the sight of all. A long 'O—h—h!' went round the company, the majority instantaneously pricing it mentally, and wondering at what reduction Sam had acquired it from a brother commercial. For that no Jew ever pays full retail price for jewellery is regarded as axiomatic. Even the engagement ring is not required to be first-hand, or should it be first-finger,

so long as it is solid, which perhaps accounts for the superiority of the Jewish marriage-rate. Leah rose entirely to her feet, the light of the diamond reflected in her eager eyes. She leant across the table, stretching out a finger to receive her lover's gift. Sam put the ring near her finger, then drew it away teasingly.

'Them as asks shan't have,' he said in high good humour. 'You're too greedy! Look at the number of rings you've got already.' The fun of the situation diffused itself along the table.

'Give it me,' laughed Miriam Hyams, stretching out her finger. 'I'll say "ta" so nicely.'

'No,' he said, 'you've been naughty; I'm going to give it to the little girl who has sat quiet all the time. Miss Hannah Jacobs, rise to receive your prize.'

Hannah, who was sitting two places to the left of him, smiled quietly, but went on carving her fish. Sam, growing quite boisterous under the appreciation of a visibly amused audience, leaned towards her, captured her right hand, and forcibly adjusted the ring on the forefinger, exclaiming in Hebrew, with mock solemnity, 'Behold, thou art consecrated unto me by this ring according to the Law of Moses and Israel.'

It was the formal marriage speech he had learnt up for his approaching marriage. The

company roared with laughter, and pleasure and enjoyment of the fun made Leah's lovely, smiling cheeks flush to a livelier crimson. Badinage flew about from one end of the table to the other; burlesque congratulations were showered on the couple, flowing over even unto Mrs. Jacobs, who appeared to enjoy the episode as much as if her daughter were really off her hands. The little incident added the last touch of high spirits to the company and extorted all their latent humour. Samuel excelled himself in vivacious repartee, and responded comically to the toast of his health as drunk in coffee. Suddenly, amid the hubbub of chaff and laughter and the clatter of cutlery, a still, small voice made itself heard. It came from old Hyams, who had been sitting quietly with brow corrugated under his black velvet *Koppel*.

'Mr. Levine,' he said, in low, grave tones, 'I have been thinking, and I am afraid that what you have done is serious.'

The earnestness of his tones arrested the attention of the company. The laughter ceased.

'What do you mean?' said Samuel. He understood the Yiddish, which old Hyams almost invariably used, though he did not speak it himself. Contrariwise, old Hyams understood much more English than he spoke.

'You have married Hannah Jacobs.'

There was a painful silence, dim recollections surging in everybody's brain.

'Married Hannah Jacobs!' repeated Samuel incredulously.

'Yes,' affirmed old Hyams. 'What you have done constitutes a marriage according to Jewish law. You have pledged yourself to her in the presence of two witnesses.'

There was another tense silence. Samuel broke it with a boisterous laugh.

'No, no, old fellow,' he said; 'you don't have me like that!'

The tension was relaxed. Everybody joined in the laugh with a feeling of indescribable relief. Facetious old Hyams had gone near scoring one. Hannah smilingly plucked off the glittering bauble from her finger and slid it on to Leah's. Hyams alone remained grave.

'Laugh away!' he said. 'You will soon find I am right. Such is our law.'

'Maybe,' said Samuel, constrained to seriousness despite himself. 'But you forget that I am already engaged to Leah.'

'I do not forget it,' replied Hyams; 'but it has nothing to do with the case. You are both single, or, rather, you *were* both single, for now you are man and wife.'

Leah, who had been sitting pale and agitated, burst into tears. Hannah's face was drawn and

white. Her mother looked the least alarmed of the company.

'Droll person!' cried Malka, addressing Sam angrily in jargon. 'What hast thou done?'

'Don't let us all go mad!' said Samuel, bewildered. 'How can a piece of fun, a joke, be a valid marriage?'

'The law takes no account of jokes,' said old Hyams solemnly.

'Then why didn't you stop me?' asked Sam, exasperated.

'It was all done in a moment. I laughed myself; I had no time to think.'

Sam brought his fist down on the table with a bang.

'Well, I'll never believe this! If this is Judaism——'

'Hush!' said Malka angrily. 'These are your English Jews, who make mock of holy things. I always said the son of a proselyte was——'

'Look here, mother,' put in Michael soothingly. 'Don't let us make a fuss before we know the truth. Send for someone who is likely to know.' He played agitatedly with his complex pocket-knife.

'Yes; Hannah's father, Reb Shemuel, is just the man!' cried Milly Phillips.

'I told you my husband was gone to Man-

chester for a day or two,' Mrs. Jacobs reminded her.

'There's the Maggid of the Sons of the Covenant,' said one of the company. 'I'll go and fetch him.'

The stooping, black-bearded Maggid was brought. When he arrived, it was evident from his look that he knew all and brought confirmation of their worst fears. He explained the law at great length, and cited precedent upon precedent. When he ceased, Leah's sobs alone broke the silence. Samuel's face was white. The merry gathering had been turned to a wedding-party.

'You rogue!' burst forth Malka at last. 'You planned all this—you thought my Leah didn't have enough money, and that Reb Shemuel will heap you up gold in the hands. But you don't take me in like this.'

'May this piece of bread choke me if I had the slightest iota of intention!' cried Samuel passionately, for the thought of what Leah might think was like fire in his veins. He turned appealingly to the Maggid: 'But there must be some way out of this—surely there must be some way out. I know you Maggidim can split hairs. Can't you make one of your clever distinctions even when there's more than a trifle concerned?'

There was a savage impatience about the bridegroom which boded ill for the law.

'Of course there's a way out,' said the Maggid calmly. 'Only one way, but a very broad and simple one.'

'What's that?' everybody asked breathlessly.

'He must give her *Gett!*'

'Of course!' shouted Sam, in a voice of thunder. 'I divorce her at once!' He guffawed hysterically. 'What a pack of fools we are! Good old Jewish law!'

Leah's sobs ceased. Everybody except Mrs. Jacobs was smiling once more. Half a dozen hands grasped the Maggid's; half a dozen others thumped him on the back. He was pushed into a chair. They gave him a glass of brandy; they heaped a plate with fried fish. Verily the Maggid, who was in truth sore a-hungered, was in luck's way. He blessed Providence and the Jewish marriage law.

'But you had better not reckon that a divorce,' he warned them between two mouthfuls. 'You had better go to Reb Shemuel, the maiden's father, and let him arrange the *Gett* beyond reach of cavil.'

'But Reb Shemuel is away,' said Mrs. Jacobs.

'And I must go away, too, by the first train to-morrow,' said Sam. 'However, there's no hurry. I'll arrange to run up to town again in

a fortnight or so, and then Reb Shemuel shall untie us. You don't mind being my wife for a fortnight, I hope, Miss Jacobs?' asked Sam, winking gleefully at Leah.

She smiled back at him, and they laughed together over the danger they had just escaped. Hannah laughed, too, in contemptuous amusement at the rigidity of Jewish law.

'I'll tell you what, Sam: can't you come back for next Saturday week?' said Leah.

'Why?' asked Sam. 'What's on?'

'The Purim ball at the Club. As you've got to come back to give Hannah *Gett*, you might as well come in time to take me to the ball.'

'Right you are!' said Sam cheerfully.

Leah clapped her hands.

'Oh, that will be jolly!' she said. 'And we'll take Hannah with us,' she added as an afterthought.

'Is that by way of compensation for losing my husband?' Hannah asked, with a smile.

Leah gave a happy laugh, and turned the new ring on her finger in delighted contemplation.

'All's well that ends well,' said Sam. 'Through this joke Leah will be the belle of the Purim ball. I think I deserve another piece of plaice, Leah, for that compliment. As for you, Mr. Maggid, you're a saint and a Talmud sage!'

The Maggid's face was brightened by a smile.

He intoned the grace with unction when the meal ended, and everybody joined in heartily at the specifically vocal portions. Then the Maggid left, and the cards were brought out.

It is inadvisable to play cards *before* fried fish, because it is well known that you may lose, and losing may ruffle your temper, and you may call your partner an ass or your partner may call you an ass. To-night the greatest good-humour prevailed, though several pounds changed hands. They played loo, 'klobbiyos,' napoleon, vingt-et-un, and especially brag. Solo-whist had not yet come in to drive everything else out. Old Hyams did not *spiel*, because he could not afford to, and Hannah Jacobs because she did not care to. These and a few other guests left early, but the family party stayed late. On a warm green table, under a cheerful gaslight, with brandy and whisky and sweets and fruit to hand, with no trains or 'buses to catch, what wonder if the light-hearted assembly played far into the new day?

Meanwhile, the redeemed son slept peacefully in his crib with his legs curled up, and his little fists clenched beneath the coverlet.

CHAPTER V.

THE PAUPER ALIEN.

Moses Ansell married mainly because all men are mortal. He knew he would die, and he wanted an heir. Not to inherit anything, but to say *Kaddish* for him. *Kaddish* is the most beautiful and wonderful mourning prayer ever written. Rigidly excluding all references to death and grief, it exhausts itself in supreme glorification of the Eternal, and in supplication for peace upon the house of Israel. But its significance has been gradually transformed; human nature, driven away with a pitchfork, has avenged itself by regarding the prayer as a mass, not without purgatorial efficacy, and so the Jew is reluctant to die without leaving someone qualified to say *Kaddish* after him every day for a year, and then one day a year. That is one reason why sons are of such domestic importance.

Moses had only a mother in the world when

he married Gittel Silverstein, and he hoped to restore the balance of male relatives by this reckless measure. The result was six children, three girls and three *Kaddishim*. In Gittel Moses found a tireless helpmate. During her lifetime the family always lived in two rooms, for she had various ways of supplementing the household income. When in London, she chared for her cousin Malka at a shilling a day. Likewise she sewed underlinen and stitched slips of fur into caps in the privacy of home and midnight. For all Mrs. Ansell's industry, the family had been a typical group of wandering Jews, straying from town to town in search of better things. The congregation they left (every town which could muster the minimum of ten men for worship boasted its *Kehillah*) invariably paid their fare to the next congregation, glad to get rid of them so cheaply; and the new *Kehillah* jumped at the opportunity of gratifying their restless migratory instinct and sent them to a newer. Thus were they tossed about on the battledores of philanthropy, often reverting to their starting-point, to the disgust of the charitable committees. Yet Moses always made loyal efforts to find work. His versatility was marvellous. There was nothing he could not do badly. He had been glazier, synagogue beadle, picture-frame manufacturer, cantor, pedlar, shoe-

maker in all branches, coat-seller, official executioner of fowls and cattle, Hebrew teacher, fruiterer, circumciser, professional corpse-watcher, and now he was a tailor out of work.

Unquestionably Malka was right in considering Moses a *Schlemihl* in comparison with many a fellow-immigrant, who brought indefatigable hand and subtle brain to the struggle for existence, and discarded the prop of charity as soon as he could, and sometimes earlier.

It was as a hawker that Moses believed himself most gifted, and he never lost the conviction that, if he could only get a fair start, he had in him the makings of a millionaire. Yet there was scarcely anything cheap with which he had not tramped the country ; so that when poor Benjamin, who profited by his mother's death to get into the Orphan Asylum, was asked to write a piece of composition on 'The Methods of Travelling,' he excited the hilarity of the class-room by writing that there were numerous ways of travelling, for you could travel with sponge, lemons, rhubarb, old clothes, jewellery, and so on for a page of a copy-book. Benjamin was a brilliant boy, yet he never shook off some of the misleading associations engendered by the parental jargon. For Mrs. Ansell had diversified her corrupt German by streaks of incorrect English, being of a much more energetic and

ambitious temperament than the conservative Moses, who dropped nearly all his burden of English into her grave. For Benjamin 'to travel' meant to wander about selling goods, and when in his books he read of African travellers, he took it for granted that they were but exploiting the Dark Continent for small profits and quick returns.

And who knows? Perhaps of the two species, it was the old Jewish pedlars who suffered the more and made the less profit on the average. For the despised three-hatted scarecrow of Christian caricature, who shambled along snuffling 'Old clo',' had a strenuous inner life, which might possibly have vied in intensity, elevation, and even sense of humour, with that of the best of the jeerers on the highway. To Moses 'travelling' meant straying forlornly in strange towns and villages, given over to the worship of an alien deity, and ever ready to avenge his crucifixion; in a land of whose tongue he knew scarce more than the Saracen damsel married by legend to A'Becket's father. It meant praying brazenly in crowded railway trains, winding the phylacteries sevenfold round his left arm, and crowning his forehead with a huge leather bump of righteousness, to the bewilderment or irritation of unsympathetic fellow-passengers. It meant living chiefly on dry bread and drinking

black tea out of his own cup, with meat and fish and the good things of life utterly banned by the traditional law, even if he were flush. It meant carrying the red rag of an obnoxious personality through a land of bulls. It meant passing months away from wife and children, in a solitude only occasionally alleviated by a sabbath spent in a synagogue-town. It meant putting up at low public-houses and common lodging-houses, where rowdy disciples of the Prince of Peace often sent him bleeding to bed, or shamelessly despoiled him of his merchandise, or bullied and blustered him out of his fair price, knowing he dared not resent. It meant being chaffed and gibed at in language of which he only understood that it was cruel, though certain trite facetiæ grew intelligible to him by repetition.

Thus, once when he had been interrogated as to the locality of Moses when the light went out, he replied in Yiddish that the light could not go out, for 'it stands in the verse that round the head of Moses, our Teacher, the great Lawgiver, was a perpetual halo.'

An old German happened to be smoking at the bar of the public-house when the pedlar gave his acute answer. He laughed heartily, slapped he Jew on the back, and translated the repartee to the convivial crew. For once intellect told, and the rough drinkers, with a pang of shame,

vied with one another in pressing bitter beer upon the temperate Semite. But, as a rule, Moses Ansell drank the cup of affliction instead of hospitality, and bore his share to the full, without the remotest intention of being heroic, in the long agony of his race, doomed to be a byword and a mockery amongst the heathen. Assuredly to die for a religion is easier than to live for it. Yet Moses never complained nor lost faith. To be spat upon was the very condition of existence of the modern Jew, deprived of Palestine and his Temple—a footsore mendicant, buffeted and reviled, yet the dearer to the Lord God who had chosen him from the nations. Bullies might break Moses's head in this world, but in the next he would sit on a gold chair in Paradise among the saints, and sing exegetical acrostics to all eternity.

It was some dim perception of these things that made Esther forgive her father when the Ansells waited weeks and weeks for a postal order, and landlords were threatening to bundle them out neck and crop, and her mother's hands were worn to the bone slaving for her little ones.

Things improved a little just before the mother died, for they had settled down in London, and Moses earned eighteen shillings a week as a machinist and presser and no longer

roamed the country. But the interval of happiness was brief. The grandmother, imported from Poland, did not take kindly to her son's wife, whom she found wanting in the minutiæ of ceremonial piety, and godless enough to wear her own hair. There had been, indeed, a note of scepticism, of defiance, in Esther's mother—a hankering after the customs of the heathen, which her grandmother divined instinctively, and resented for the sake of her son and the post-mundane existence of her grandchildren. Mrs. Ansell's scepticism based itself upon the uncleanliness which was so generally next to godliness in the pious circles round them, and she had been heard to express contempt for the learned and venerable Israelite who, being accosted by an acquaintance when the shadows of eve were beginning to usher in the Day of Atonement, exclaimed :

'For heaven's sake don't stop me—I missed my bath last year!'

Mrs. Ansell bathed her children from head to foot once a month, and even profanely washed them on the Sabbath, and had other strange, uncanny notions. She professed not to see the value to God, man, or beast of the learned Rabbonim, who sat shaking themselves all day in the Beth Hamidrash, and said they would be better occupied in supporting their families—a

view which, though mere surface-blasphemy on the part of the good woman, and primarily intended as a hint to Moses to study less and work longer, did not fail to excite lively passages of arms between the two women. But death ended these bickerings, and the *Bube*, who had frequently reproached her son for bringing her into such an atheistic country, was left a drag the more upon the family deprived at once of a mother and a bread-winner. Old Mrs. Ansell was unfit for anything save grumbling, and so the headship naturally devolved upon Esther, whom her mother's death left a woman getting on for eight. The commencement of her reign coincided with a sad bisection of territory. Shocking as it may be to better-regulated minds, these seven people lived in one room. Moses and the two boys slept in one bed, and the grandmother and the three girls in another. Esther had to sleep with her head on a supplementary pillow at the foot of the bed. But there can be much love in a little room.

The room was not, however, so very little, for it was of ungainly, sprawling structure, pushing out an odd limb that might have been cut off with a curtain. The walls nodded fixedly to one another, so that the ceiling was only half the size of the floor. The furniture comprised but the commonest necessities. This attic of the

Ansells was nearer heaven than most earthly dwelling-places, for there were four tall flights of stairs to mount before you got to it.

No. 1, Royal Street had been in its time one of the great mansions of the Ghetto ; pillars of the synagogue had quaffed *kosher* wine in its spacious reception-rooms, and its corridors had echoed with the gossip of portly dames in stiff brocades. It was stoutly built, and its balusters were of carved oak. But now the threshold of the great street door, which was never closed, was encrusted with black mud, and a musty odour permanently clung to the wide staircases, and blent subtly with far-away reminiscences of Mr. Belcovitch's festive turpentine.

The Ansells had numerous housemates, for No. 1, Royal Street was a Jewish colony in itself, and the resident population was periodically swollen by the 'hands' of the Belcovitches, and by the Sons of the Covenant, who came to worship at their synagogue on the ground-floor.

What with Sugarman the Shadchan on the first-floor, Mrs. Simons and Dutch Debby on the second, the Belcovitches on the third, and the Ansells and Gabriel Hamburg, the great scholar, on the fourth, the doorposts twinkled with *Mezuzahs*—cases or cylinders containing sacred script, with the word *Shaddai* (Almighty) peer-

ing out of a little glass eye at the centre. Even Dutch Debby, abandoned wretch as she was, had this protection against evil spirits (so it has come to be regarded) on her lintel, though she probably never touched the eye with her finger to kiss the place of contact after the manner of the faithful.

Thus was No. 1, Royal Street close-packed with the stuff of human life, homespun and drab enough, but not altogether profitless, maybe, to turn over and examine; so close-packed was it that there was scarce breathing space. It was only at immemorial intervals that our pauper alien made a pun, but one day he flashed upon the world the pregnant remark that England was well named, for to the Jew it was verily the Enge-land, which in German signifies the country without elbow-room. Moses Ansell chuckled softly and beatifically when he emitted the remark that surprised all who knew him. But then it was the Rejoicing of the Law, and the Sons of the Covenant had treated him to rum and currant cake. He often thought of his witticism afterwards, and it always lightened his unwashed face with a happy smile. The recollection usually caught him when he was praying.

For four years after Mrs. Ansell's charity funeral, the Ansells, though far from happy, had no history to speak of.

Benjamin accompanied Solomon to *Shool* morning and evening, to say *Kaddish* for their mother, till he passed into the Orphan Asylum and out of the lives of his relatives. Solomon and Rachel and Esther went to the great school, and Isaac to the infant school; while the tiny Sarah, whose birth had cost Mrs. Ansell's life, crawled and climbed about in the garret, the grandmother coming in negatively useful as a safeguard against fire on the days when the grate was not empty. The *Bube's* own conception of her function as a safeguard against fire was quite other.

Moses was out all day working, or looking for work, or praying, or listening to '*Droshes*' by the Maggid or other great preachers. Such charities as brightened and warmed the Ghetto Moses usually came in for. Bread, meat, and coal-tickets, godsends from the Society for Restoring the Soul, made odd days memorable; blankets were not so easy to get as in the days of poor Gittel's confinements.

What little cooking there was to do was done by Esther before or after school; she and her children usually took their mid-day meal with them in the shape of bread, occasionally made ambrosial by treacle. The Ansells had more fast-days than the Jewish calendar, which is saying a good deal. Providence, however,

generally stepped in before the larder had been bare twenty-four hours.

As the fast-days of the Jewish calendar did not necessarily fall upon the Ansell fast-days, they were an additional tax on Moses and his mother. Yet neither ever wavered in the scrupulous observance of them, not a crumb of bread nor a drop of water passing their lips. In the keen search for facts detrimental to the Ghetto, it is surprising that no political economist has hitherto exposed the abundant fasts with which Israel has been endowed, and which obviously operate as a dole in aid of wages So does the Lenten period of the 'three weeks,' when meat is prohibited in memory of the shattered Temples. The Ansells kept the 'three weeks' pretty well all the year round. On rare occasions they purchased pickled Dutch herrings, or brought home pennyworths of pea-soup, or of baked potatoes and rice, from a neighbouring cookshop. For Festival days, if Malka had subsidized them with a half-sovereign, Esther sometimes compounded *Tzimmus*, a dainty blend of carrots, pudding, and potatoes. She was prepared to write an essay on *Tzimmus* as a gastronomic ideal. There were other pleasing Polish combinations which were baked for two-pence by the local bakers. *Tabechas*, or stuffed entrails, and liver, lights or milt, were good

substitutes for meat. A favourite soup was *Borsch*, which was made with beetroot, fat taking the place of the more fashionable cream.

The national dish was seldom their lot. When fried fish came it was usually from the larder of Mrs. Simons, a motherly old widow who lived in the second floor front, and presided over the confinements of all the women, and the sicknesses of all the children, in the neighbourhood. Her married daughter, Dinah, was providentially suckling a black-eyed boy when Mrs. Ansell died, so Mrs. Simons converted her into a foster-mother of little Sarah, regarding herself ever afterwards as under special responsibilities towards the infant, whom she occasionally took to live with her for a week, and for whom she saw Heaven encouraging a future alliance with the black-eyed foster-brother. Life would have been gloomier still in the Ansell garret if Mrs. Simons had not been created to bless and sustain. Even old garments somehow arrived from Mrs. Simons to eke out the corduroys and the print gowns which were the gift of the school. There were few pleasanter events in the Ansell household than the falling ill of one of the children, for not only did this mean a supply of broth, port wine, and other incredible luxuries from the charity doctor (of which all could taste), but it brought in its

train the assiduous attendance of Mrs. Simons. To see the kindly brown face bending over it with smiling eyes of jet, to feel the soft cool hand pressed to its forehead, was worth a fever to a motherless infant. Mrs. Simons was a busy woman, and a poor withal, and the Ansells were a reticent pack, not given to expressing either their love or their hunger to outsiders; so altogether the children did not see so much of Mrs. Simons or her bounties as they would have liked. Nevertheless, in a grave crisis she was always to be counted upon.

'I tell thee what, Méshe,' said old Mrs. Ansell often, 'that woman wants to marry thee. A blind man could see it.'

'She cannot want it, mother,' Moses would reply with infinite respect.

'What art thou saying? A wholly fine young man like thee,' said his mother, fondling his side ringlets, 'and one so *froom*, too, and with such worldly wisdom. But thou must not have her, Méshe.'

'What kind of idea thou stuffest into my head! I tell thee she would not have me if I sent to ask.'

'Talk not thyself thereinto. Who wouldn't like to catch hold of thy cloak to go to heaven by? But Mrs. Simons is too much of an Englishwoman for me. Your last wife had English

ideas, and made mock of pious men, and God's judgment took her. What says the Prayer-Book? For three things a woman dies in child-birth, for not separating the dough, for not lighting the Sabbath lamps, for not——'

'How often have I told thee she did do all these things!' interrupted Moses.

'Dost thou contradict the Prayer-Book?' said the *Bube* angrily. 'It would have been different if thou hadst let me pick a woman for thee. But this time thou wilt honour thy mother more. It must be a respectable, virtuous maiden, with the fear of Heaven; not an old woman like Mrs. Simons, but one who can bear me robust grand-children. The grand-children thou hast given me are sickly, and they fear not the Most High. Ah! why didst thou drag me to this impious country? Couldst thou not let me die in peace? Thy girls think more of English story-books and lessons than of Yiddishkeit, and the boys run out under the naked sky with bare heads, and are loath to wash their hands before meals, and they do not come home in the dinner-hour for fear they should have to say the after-noon prayer. Laugh at me, Moses, as thou wilt, but, old as I am, I have eyes, and not two blotches of clay in my sockets. Thou seest not how thy family is going to destruc-tion. Oh, the abominations!'

Thus warned and put on his mettle, Moses would keep a keen look-out on his hopeful family for the next day, and the seed which the grandmother had sown came up in black and blue bruises on the family anatomy, especially on that portion of it which belonged to Solomon. For Moses's crumbling trousers were buckled with a stout strap, and Solomon was a young rogue who did his best to dodge the Almighty, and had never heard of Lowell's warning:

> 'You've gut to git up airly,
> Ef you want to take in God.'

Even if he had heard of it, he would probably have retorted that he usually got up early enough to take in his father, who was the more immediately terrible of the two. Nevertheless, Solomon learnt many lessons at his father's knee, or rather across it. In earlier days Solomon had had a number of confidential transactions with his father's God, making bargains with Him according to his childish sense of equity. If, for instance, God would ensure his doing his sums correctly, so that he should neither be caned nor 'kept in,' he would say his morning prayers, without skipping the aggravating *Longe Verachum* which bulked so largely on Mondays and Thursdays; otherwise he could not be bothered.

By the terms of the contract, Solomon threw

all the initiative on the Deity, and whenever the Deity undertook His share of the contract, Solomon honourably fulfilled his. Thus was his faith in Providence never shaken like that of some boys, who expect the Deity to follow their lead. Still, by declining to praise his Maker at extraordinary length except in acknowledgment of services rendered, Solomon gave early evidence of his failure to inherit his father's business incapacity.

On days when things at the school went well, no one gabbled through the weary Prayer-Book more conscientiously than he; he said all the things in large type, and all the funny little bits in small type, and even some passages without vowels. Nay, he included the very prefaces, and was lured on and coaxed on, and enticed by his father to recite the appendices which shot up one after the other on the devotional horizon like the endless-seeming terraces of a deceptive ascent; just another little bit, and now that little bit, and just that last bit, and one more very last little bit. It was like the infinite inclusiveness of a Chinese sphere, or the farewell performances of a distinguished singer.

For the rest Solomon was a *Chine-ponim*, or droll, having that inextinguishable sense of humour which has made the saints of the Jewish Church human, and has lit up dry technical

Talmudic discussions with flashes of freakish fun —with pun and jest and merry quibble—and has helped the race to survive (*pace* Dr. Wallace) by dint of a humorous acquiescence in the inevitable.

His *Chine* helped Solomon to survive synagogue, where the only drop of sweetness was in the beaker of wine for the sanctification service. Solomon was always in the van of the brave boys who volunteered to take part in the ceremonial quaffing of it. Decidedly Solomon was not spiritual; he would not even kiss a Hebrew Pentateuch that he had dropped, unless his father was looking, and but for the personal supervision of the *Bube*, the dirty white fringes of his 'four-corners' might have got tangled and irredeemably invalidated, for all he cared.

In the direst need of the Ansells, Solomon held his curly head high among his schoolfellows, and never lacked personal possessions, though they were not negotiable at the pawnbroker's. He had a peep-show, made out of an old cocoa-box, and representing the sortie from Plevna, a permit to view being obtainable for a fragment of slate pencil. For two pins he would let you look a whole minute. He also had bags of brass buttons, marbles, both commoners and alleys, nibs, beer bottle labels, and cherry 'hogs,' besides bottles of liquorice-water, vendible either

by the sip or the teaspoonful; and he dealt in 'assy-tassy,' which consisted of little packets of acetic acid blent with brown sugar. The character of his stock varied according to the time of year, for Nature and Belgravia are less stable in their seasons than the Jewish school-boy, to whom buttons in March are as inconceivable as snowballing in July.

On Purim Solomon always had nuts to gamble with, just as if he had been a banker's son, and on the Day of Atonement he was never without a little tin fusee box filled with savings of snuff. This, when the fast racked them most sorely, he would pass round among the old men with a grand manner. They would take a pinch and say 'May thy strength increase,' and blow their delighted noses with great coloured handkerchiefs, and Solomon would feel about fifty, and sniff a few grains himself with the air of an aged connoisseur.

He took little interest in the subtle disquisitions of the Rabbis, which added their burden to his cross of secular learning. He wrestled but perfunctorily with the theses of the Bible commentators, for Moses Ansell was so absorbed in translating and enjoying the intellectual tangles, that Solomon had scarce more to do than to play the part of chorus. He was fortunate in that his father could not afford to send him to a *Chedar*,

an insanitary institution that made Jacob a dull boy by cutting off his playtime and his oxygen, and delivering him over to the leathery mercies of an unintelligently learned zealot, scrupulously unclean.

The literature and history Solomon really cared for was not of the Jews. It was the history of Daredevil Dick and his congeners, whose surprising adventures, second-hand, in ink-stained sheets, were bartered to him for buttons, which shows the advantages of not having a soul above such. These deeds of derring-do (usually starting in a *Sturm und Drang* schoolroom period, in which teachers were thankfully accepted as created by Providence for the sport of schoolboys) Solomon conned at all hours, concealing them under his locker when he was supposed to be studying the Irish Question from an atlas, and even hiding them between the leaves of his dog-eared Prayer-Book for use during the morning service. The only harm they did him was that inflicted through the medium of the educational rod, when his surreptitious readings were discovered and his treasures thrown to the flames amid tears copious enough to extinguish them.

CHAPTER VI.

'REB' SHEMUEL.

'The Torah is greater than the priesthood and than royalty, seeing that royalty demands thirty qualifications, the priesthood twenty-four, while the Torah is acquired by forty-eight. And these are they: by audible study; by distinct pronunciation; by understanding and discernment of the heart; by awe, reverence, meekness, cheerfulness; by ministering to the sages; by attaching one's self to colleagues, by discussion with disciples, by sedateness; by knowledge of the Scripture and of the Mishnah; by moderation in business, in intercourse with the world, in pleasure, in sleep, in conversation, in laughter; by long suffering, by a good heart, by faith in the wise; by resignation under chastisement; by recognising one's place, rejoicing in one's portion, putting a fence to one's words, claiming no merit for one's self; by being beloved, loving the All-present, loving mankind, loving just courses, rectitude and reproof; by keeping one's self far from honours, not boasting of one's learning, nor delighting in giving decisions; by bearing the yoke with one's fellow, judging him favourably, and leading him to truth and peace; by being composed in one's study; by asking and answering, hearing and adding thereto (by one's own reflection); by learning with the object of teaching and learning with the object of practising; by making one's master wiser, fixing attention upon his discourse, and reporting a thing in the name of him who said it. So thou hast learnt. Whosoever

reports a thing in the name of him that said it brings deliverance into the world, as it is said: And Esther told the King in the name of Mordecai' (*'Ethics of the Fathers,' Singer's translation*).

Moses Ansell only occasionally worshipped at the synagogue of the Sons of the Covenant, for it was too near to make attendance a *Mitzvah*, pleasing in the sight of Heaven. It was like having the prayer-quorum brought to you, instead of your going to it. The pious Jew must speed to *Shool* to show his eagerness, and return slowly, as with reluctant feet, lest Satan draw the attention of the Holy One to the laches of His chosen people. It was not easy to express these varying emotions on a few flights of stairs, and so Moses went farther afield. In subtle minutiæ like this Moses was *facile princeps*, being, as Wellhausen puts it, of the *virtuosi* of religion. If he put on his right stocking (or rather foot-lappet, for he did not wear stockings) first, he made amends by putting on the left boot first, and if he had lace-up boots, then the boot put on second would have a compensatory precedence in the lacing. Thus was the divine principle of justice symbolized even in these small matters.

Moses was a great man in several of the more distant *Chevrahs* among which he distributed the privilege of his presence. It was only when by accident the times of service did not coincide that Moses favoured the Sons of the Covenant,

making an appearance either at the commencement or the fag-end, for he was not above praying odd bits of the service twice over, and even sometimes prefaced or supplemented his synagogal performances by solo renditions of the entire ritual of a hundred pages at home. The morning services began at six in winter and seven in summer, so that the working man might start his long day's work fortified.

At the close of the service at the Beth Hamidrash, a few mornings after the Redemption of Ezekiel, Solomon went up to Reb Shemuel, who, in return for the privilege of blessing the boy, gave him a halfpenny. Solomon passed it on to his father, whom he accompanied.

'Well, how goes it, Reb Moshé?' said Reb Shemuel with his cheery smile, noticing Moses loitering. He called him 'Reb' out of courtesy and in acknowledgment of his piety. The real "Reb' was a fine figure of a man, with matter, if not piety, enough for two Moses Ansells. 'Reb' was a popular corruption of 'Rav' or 'Rabbi.'

'Bad,' replied Moses. 'I haven't had any machining to do for a month. Work is very slack at this time of year. But God is good!'

'Can't you sell something?' said Reb Shemuel, thoughtfully caressing his long gray-streaked black beard.

'I have sold lemons; but the four or five shillings I made went in bread for the children and in rent. Money runs through the fingers, somehow, with a family of five and a frosty winter! When the lemons were gone, I stood where I started.'

The Rabbi sighed sympathetically, and slipped half a crown into Moses's palm. Then he hurried out. His boy, Levi, stayed behind a moment to finish a transaction involving the barter of a pea-shooter for some of Solomon's buttons. Levi was two years older than Solomon, and was further removed from him by going to a 'middle-class' school. His manner towards Solomon was of corresponding condescension. But it took a great deal to overawe Solomon, who, with the national humour, possessed the national *Chutzbah*, which is variously translated enterprise, audacity, brazen impudence and cheek.

'I say, Levi,' he said, 'we've got no school to-day! Won't you come round this morning and play I-spy-I in our street? There are some splendid corners for hiding, and they are putting up new buildings all round with lovely hoardings, and they're knocking down a pickle warehouse; and while you're hiding in the rubbish you sometimes pick up scrumptious bits of pickled walnut. Oh, golly, ain't they prime!'

Levi turned up his nose.

'We've got plenty of whole walnuts at home,' he said.

Solomon felt snubbed. He became aware that this tall boy had smart black clothes, which would not be improved by rubbing against his own greasy corduroys.

'Oh, well,' he said, 'I can get lots of boys, and girls too!'

'Say,' said Levi, turning back a little. 'That little girl your father brought upstairs here on the Rejoicing of the Law—that was your sister, wasn't it?'

'Esther, d'ye mean?'

'How should I know? A little dark girl, with a print dress; rather pretty—not a bit like you.'

'Yes, that's our Esther; she's in the sixth standard, and only eleven!'

'We don't have standards in our school!' said Levi contemptuously. 'Will your sister join in the I-spy-I?'

'No, she can't run,' replied Solomon, half apologetically. 'She only likes to read. She reads all my *Boys of Englands* and things; and now she's got hold of a little brown book she keeps all to herself. I like reading, too; but I do it in school or in *Shool*, when there's nothing better to do.'

'Has she got a holiday to-day, too?

'Yes,' said Solomon.

'But my school's open,' said Levi enviously; and Solomon lost the feeling of inferiority, and felt avenged.

'Come, then, Solomon,' said his father, who had reached the door. The two converted part of the half-crown into French loaves, and carried them home to form an unexpected breakfast.

Meantime Reb Shemuel, whose full name was the Reverend Samuel Jacobs, also proceeded to breakfast. His house lay near the *Shool*, and was approached by an avenue of mendicants. He arrived in his shirt-sleeves.

'Quick, Simcha, give me my new coat! It is very cold this morning.'

'You've given away your coat again!' shrieked his wife, who, though her name meant 'Rejoicing,' was more often upbraiding.

'Yes, it was only an old one, Simcha,' said the Rabbi deprecatingly. He took off his high hat, and replaced it by a little black cap which he carried in his tail-pocket.

'You'll ruin me, Shemuel!' moaned Simcha, wringing her hands. 'You'd give away the shirt off your skin to a pack of good-for-nothing *Schnorrers!*'

'Yes, if they had only their skin in the world. Why not?' said the old Rabbi, a pacific gleam in

his large gazelle-like eyes. 'Perhaps my coat may have the honour to cover Elijah the prophet.'

'Elijah the prophet!' snorted Simcha. 'Elijah has sense enough to stay in heaven, and not go wandering about shivering in the fog and frost of this God-accursed country!'

The old Rabbi answered, 'Atschew!'

'For Thy salvation do I hope, O Lord!' murmured Simcha piously in Hebrew, adding excitedly in English: 'Ah, you'll kill yourself, Shemuel!' She rushed upstairs and returned with another coat and a new terror.

'Here, you fool, you've been and done a fine thing this time! All your silver was in the coat you've given away!'

'Was it?' said Reb Shemuel, startled. Then the tranquil look returned to his brown eyes: 'No, I took it all out before I gave away the coat.'

'God be thanked!' said Simcha fervently in Yiddish. 'Where is it? I want a few shillings for grocery.'

'I gave it away before, I tell you!'

Simcha groaned, and fell into her chair with a crash that rattled the tray and shook the cups.

'Here's the end of the week coming,' she sobbed, 'and I shall have no fish for Shabbos.'

'Do not blaspheme!' said Reb Shemuel,

tugging a little angrily at his venerable beard. 'The Holy One—blessed be He!—will provide for our Shabbos.'

Simcha made a sceptical mouth, knowing that it was she, and nobody else, whose economies would provide for the due celebration of the Sabbath. Only by a constant course of vigilance, mendacity and petty peculation at her husband's expense could she manage to support the family of four comfortably on his pretty considerable salary. Reb Shemuel went and kissed her on the sceptical mouth, because in another instant she would have him at her mercy. He washed his hands, and durst not speak between that and the first bite.

He was an official of heterogeneous duties—he preached and taught and lectured. He married people and divorced them. He released bachelors from the duty of marrying their deceased brothers' wives. He superintended a slaughtering department, licensed men as competent killers, examined the sharpness of their knives that the victims might be put to as little pain as possible, and inspected dead cattle in the shambles to see if they were perfectly sound and free from pulmonary disease. But his greatest function was *paskening*, or answering inquiries, ranging from the simplest to the most complicated problems of ceremonial ethics and civil

law. He had added a volume of Shaaloth-Shuvoth, or 'Questions and Answers,' to the colossal casuistic literature of his race. His aid was also invoked as a Shadchan, though he forgot to take his commissions and lacked the restless zeal for the mating of mankind which animated Sugarman, the professional match-maker. In fine, he was a witty old fellow, and everybody loved him. He and his wife spoke English with a strong foreign accent; in their more intimate causeries they dropped into Yiddish.

The Rebbitzin poured out the Rabbi's coffee, and whitened it with milk drawn direct from the cow into her own jug. The butter and cheese were equally *kosher*, coming straight from Hebrew Hollanders, and having passed through none but Jewish vessels. As the Reb sat himself down at the head of the table, Hannah entered the room.

'Good-morning, father,' she said, kissing him. 'What have you got your new coat on for? Any weddings to-day?'

'No, my dear,' said Reb Shemuel; 'marriages are falling off. There hasn't even been an engagement since Belcovitch's eldest daughter betrothed herself to Pesach Weingott.'

'Oh, these Jewish young men!' said the Rebbitzin. 'Look at my Hannah—as pretty a

girl as you could meet in the whole Lane—and yet here she is wasting her youth.'

Hannah bit her lip instead of her bread-and-butter, for she felt she had brought the talk on herself. She had heard the same grumblings from her mother for two years. Mrs. Jacobs's maternal anxiety had begun when her daughter was seventeen.

'When *I* was seventeen,' she went on, 'I was a married woman. Nowadays the girls don't begin to get a *Chosan* till they're twenty.'

'We are not living in Poland,' the Reb reminded her.

'What's that to do with it? It's the Jewish young men who want to marry gold.'

'Why blame them? A Jewish young man can marry several pieces of gold, but since Rabbenu Gershom he can marry only one woman,' said the Reb, laughing feebly, and forcing his humour for his daughter's sake.

'One woman is more than thou canst support,' said the Rebbitzin, irritated into Yiddish; 'giving away the flesh from off thy children's bones! If thou hadst been a proper father, thou wouldst have saved thy money for Hannah's dowry instead of wasting it on a parcel of vagabond *Schnorrers*. Even so I can give her a good stock of bedding and underlinen. It's a reproach and a shame that thou

hast not yet found her a husband. Thou canst find husbands quick enough for other men's daughters!'

'I found a husband for thy father's daughter,' said the Reb with a roguish gleam in his brown eyes.

'Don't throw that up to me! I could have got plenty better. And my daughter wouldn't have known the shame of finding nobody to marry her. In Poland at least the youths would have flocked to marry her because she was a Rabbi's daughter, and they'd think it an honour to be a son-in-law to a Son of the Law. But in this godless country! Why, in my village the Chief Rabbi's daughter, who was so ugly as to make one spit out, carried off the finest man in the district.'

'But thou, my Simcha, hadst no need to be connected with Rabbonim.'

'Oh yes, make mockery of me!'

'I mean it. Thou art as a lily of Sharon.'

'Wilt thou have another cup of coffee, Shemuel?'

'Yes, my life. Wait but a little and thou shalt see our Hannah under the *Chuppah*.'

'Hast thou anyone in thine eye?'

The Reb nodded his head mysteriously, and winked the eye as if nudging the person in it.

'Who is it, father?' said Levi. 'I do hope it's a real swell who talks English properly.'

'And mind you make yourself agreeable to him, Hannah,' said the Rebbitzin. 'You spoil all the matches I've tried to make for you by your stupid stiff manner.'

'Look here, mother!' cried Hannah, pushing aside her cup violently. 'Am I going to have my breakfast in peace? I don't want to be married at all. I don't want any of your Jewish men coming round to examine me as if I were a horse, and wanting to know how much money you'll give them as a set-off. Let me be! Let me be single! It's my business, not yours.'

The Rebbitzin bent eyes of angry reproach on the Reb.

'What did I tell thee, Shemuel? She's *meshuggah*—quite mad! Healthy and fresh and mad!'

'Yes, you'll drive me mad,' said Hannah savagely. 'Let me be! I'm too old now to get a *Chosan*, so let me be as I am. I can always earn my own living.'

'Thou seest, Shemuel?' said Simcha. 'Thou seest my sorrows? Thou seest how impious our children wax in this godless country!'

'Let her be, Simcha; let her be,' said the Reb. 'She is young yet. If she hasn't any inclination thereto——'

'And what is *her* inclination? A pretty thing, forsooth! Is she going to make her mother a laughing-stock! Are Mrs. Jewell and Mrs. Abrahams to dandle grand-children in my face, to gouge out my eyes with them? It isn't that she can't get young men. Only she is so high-blown. One would think she had a father who earned five hundred a year, instead of a man who scrambles half his salary among dirty *Schnorrers*.'

'Talk not like an Epicurean,' said the Reb. 'What are we all but *Schnorrers*, dependent on the charity of the Holy One—blessed be He! What! have we made ourselves? Rather fall prostrate and thank Him that His bounties to us are so great that they include the privilege of giving charity to others.'

'But we work for our living,' said the Rebbitzin. 'I wear my knees away scrubbing.'

External evidence pointed rather to the defrication of the nose.

'But, mother,' said Hannah, 'you know we have a servant to do the rough work.'

'Yes, servants!' said the Rebbitzin contemptuously. 'If you don't stand over them as the Egyptian taskmasters over our forefathers, they don't do a stroke of work except breaking the crockery. I'd much rather sweep a room myself than see a *Shiksah* pottering about for an

hour, and end by leaving all the dust on the window ledges and the corners of the mantelpiece. As for beds, I don't believe *Shiksahs* ever shake them. If I had my way, I'd wring all their necks.'

'What's the use of always complaining!' said Hannah impatiently. 'You know we must keep a *Shiksah* to attend to the Shabbos fire. The women or the little boys you pick up in the street are so unsatisfactory. When you call in a little barefoot street Arab and ask him to poke the fire, he looks at you as if you must be an imbecile not to be able to do it yourself. And then you can't always get hold of one.'

The Sabbath fire was one of the great difficulties of the Ghetto. The Rabbis had modified the Biblical prohibition against having any fire whatever, and allowed it to be kindled by non-Jews. Poor women, frequently Irish, known as *Shabbos-goyahs* or *fire-goyahs*, acted as stokers to the Ghetto at twopence a hearth. No Jew ever touched a match or a candle, or burnt a piece of paper, or even opened a letter. The *Goyah*, which is literally heathen female, did everything required on the Sabbath. His grandmother once called Solomon Ansell a Sabbath female merely for fingering the shovel when there was nothing in the grate.

The Reb liked his fire. When it sank on the

Sabbath he could not give orders to the *Shiksah* to replenish it, but he would rub his hands and remark casually (in her hearing): 'Ah, how cold it is!'

'Yes,' he said now. 'I always freeze on Shabbos when thou hast dismissed thy *Shiksah*. Thou makest me catch one cold a month.'

'*I* make thee catch cold!' retorted the Rebbitzin. 'When thou comest through the air of winter in thy shirt-sleeves! Thou'lt fall back upon me for poultices and mustard plasters, and then thou expectest me to have enough money to pay a *Shiksah* into the bargain! If I have any more of thy *Schnorrers* coming here, I shall bundle them out neck and crop.'

This was the moment selected by Fate and Melchitzedek Pinchas for the latter's entry.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEO-HEBREW POET.

He came through the open street-door, knocked perfunctorily at the door of the room, opened it, and then kissed the *Mezuzah* outside the door. Then he advanced, snatched the Rebbitzin's hand away from the handle of the coffee-pot, and kissed it with equal devotion. He then seized upon Hannah's hand and pressed his grimy lips to that, murmuring in German:

'Thou lookest so charming this morning, like the roses of Carmel.' Next he bent down and pressed his lips to the Reb's coat-tail. Finally he said 'Good-morning, sir,' to Levi, who replied very affably: 'Good-morning, Mr. Pinchas.'

'Peace be unto you, Pinchas!' said the Reb. 'I did not see you in *Shool* this morning, though it was the New Moon.'

'No, I went to the Great *Shool*,' said Pinchas in German. 'If you do not see me at your

place, you may be sure I'm somewhere else. Anyone who has lived so long as I in the Land of Israel cannot bear to pray without a quorum. In the Holy Land I used to learn for an hour in the *Shool* every morning before the service began. But I am not here to talk about myself. I came to ask you to do me the honour to accept a copy of my new volume of poems, entitled "Metatoron's Flames." Is it not a beautiful title? When Enoch was taken up to heaven while yet alive, he was converted to flames of fire and became Metatoron, the great Spirit of the Cabalah. So am I rapt up into the heaven of lyrical poetry, and become all fire and flame and light.'

The poet was a slim, dark little man, with long matted black hair. His face was hatchet-shaped, and not unlike an Aztec's; the eyes were informed by an eager brilliance. He had a heap of little paper-covered books in one hand and an extinct cigar in the other. He placed the books upon the breakfast-table.

'At last,' he said. 'See, I have got it printed —the great work which this ignorant English Judaism has left to moulder, while it pays its stupid reverends thousands a year for wearing white ties.'

'And who paid for it now, Mr. Pinchas?' said the Rebbitzin.

'Who? Who-o-o?' stammered Melchitzedek. 'Who but myself?'

'But you say you are blood-poor.'

'True as the Law of Moses! But I have written articles for the jargon-papers. They jump at me—there is not a man on the staff of them all who has the pen of a ready writer. I can't get any money out of them, my dear Rebbitzin, else I shouldn't be without breakfast this morning; but the proprietor of the largest of them is also a printer, and he has printed my little book in return. But I don't think I shall fill my stomach with the sales—oh, the Holy One—blessed be He!—bless you, Rebbitzin, of course I'll take a cup of coffee. I don't know anyone else who makes coffee with such a sweet savour; it would do for a spice-offering when the Almighty restores us our Temple. You are a happy mortal, Rebbi. You will permit that I seat myself at the table?'

Without awaiting permission he pushed a chair between Levi and Hannah and sat down; then he got up again and washed his hands, and helped himself to a spare egg.

'Here is your copy, Reb Shemuel,' he went on, after an interval. 'You see, it is dedicated generally, "To the Pillars of English Judaism." They are a set of donkey-heads, but one must give them a chance of rising to higher things.

It is true that not one of them understands Hebrew, not even the Chief Rabbi, to whom courtesy made me send a copy. Perhaps he will be able to read my poems with a dictionary; he certainly can't write Hebrew without two grammatical blunders to every word. No, no, don't defend him, Reb Shemuel, because you're under him. He ought to be under you—only he expresses his ignorance in English, and the fools think to talk nonsense in good English is to be qualified for the Rabbinate.'

The remark touched the Rabbi in a tender place. It was the one worry of his life, the consciousness that persons in high quarters disapproved of him as a force impeding the Anglicization of the Ghetto. He knew his shortcomings, but could never quite comprehend the importance of becoming English. He had a latent feeling that Judaism had flourished before England was invented, and so the poet's remark was secretly pleasing to him.

'You know very well,' went on Pinchas, 'that I and you are the only two persons in London who can write correct Holy Language.'

'No, no!' said the Rabbi deprecatingly.

'Yes, yes,' said Pinchas emphatically. 'You can write quite as well as I. But just cast your eye now on the special dedication which I have written to you in my own autograph.

'"To the light of his generation, the great Gaon, whose excellency reaches to the ends of the earth, from whose lips all the people of the Lord seek knowledge, the never-failing well, the mighty eagle who soars to heaven on the wings of understanding, to Rav Shemuel, may whose light never be dimmed, and in whose day may the Redeemer come unto Sion."

'There, take it; honour me by taking it. It is the homage of the man of genius to the man of learning—the humble offering of the one Hebrew scholar in England to the other.'

'Thank you,' said the old Rabbi, much moved. 'It is too handsome of you, and I shall read it at once and treasure it among my dearest books, for you know well that I consider that you have the truest poetic gift of any son of Israel since Jehuda Halevi.'

'I have! I know it! I feel it! It burns me. The sorrow of our race keeps me awake at night; the national hopes tingle like electricity through me; I bedêw my couch with tears in the darkness;' Pinchas paused to take another slice of bread-and-butter. 'It is then that my poems are born; the words burst into music in my head, and I sing, like Isaiah, the restoration of our land, and become the poet-patriot of my people. But these English! they care only to

make money, and to stuff it down the throats of gorging reverends. My scholarship, my poetry, my divine dreams, what are these to a besotted, brutal congregation of Men-of-the-Earth? I sent Buckledorf, the rich banker, a copy of my little book, with a special dedication, written in my own autograph, in German, so that he might understand it. And what did he send me? A beggarly five shillings! Five shillings to the one poet in whom the heavenly fire lives! How can the heavenly fire live on five shillings? I had almost a mind to send it back. And then there was Gideon, the member of Parliament. I made one of the poems an acrostic on his name, so that he might be handed down to posterity. There, that's the one. No; the one on the page you were just looking at. Yes, that's it, beginning:

"G reat leader of our Israel's host,
I sing thy high heroic deeds,
D ivinely-gifted learned man."

'I wrote his dedication in English, for he understands neither Hebrew nor German, the miserable purse-proud, vanity-eaten Man-of-the-Earth.'

'Why, didn't he give you anything at all?' said the Reb.

'Worse! he sent me back the book. But I'll be revenged on him. I'll take the acrostic out

of the next edition and let him rot in oblivion. I have been all over the world to every great city where Jews congregate. In Russia, in Turkey, in Germany, in Roumania, in Greece, in Morocco, in Palestine. Everywhere the greatest Rabbis have leapt like harts on the mountains with joy at my coming. They have fed and clothed me like a prince. I have preached at the synagogues, and everywhere people have said it was like the Wilna Gaon come again. From the neighbouring villages for miles and miles the pious have come to be blessed by me. Look at my testimonials from all the greatest saints and savants. But in England—in England alone—what is my welcome? Do they say "Welcome, Melchitzedek Pinchas! Welcome as the bridegroom to the bride, when the long day is done and the feast is o'er! Welcome to you with the torch of your genius, with the burden of your learning, that is rich with the whole wealth of Hebrew literature in all ages and countries. Here we have no great and wise men. Our Chief Rabbi is an idiot. Come thou, and be our Chief Rabbi." Do they say this? No! They greet me with scorn, coldness, slander. As for the Rev. Elkan Benjamin, who makes such a fuss of himself because he sends a wealthy congregation to sleep with his sermons, I'll expose him, as sure as

there's a guardian of Israel. I'll let the world know about his four mistresses.'

'Nonsense! Guard yourself against the evil tongue,' said the Reb. 'How do you know he has?'

'It's the Law of Moses,' said the little poet. 'True as I stand here! You ask Jacob Hermann; it was he who told me about it. Jacob Hermann said to me one day, that Benjamin has a mistress for every fringe of his "four-corners." And how many is that, eh? I do not know why he should be allowed to slander me, and I not be allowed to tell the truth about him. One day I will shoot him. You know he said that when I first came to London I joined the *Meshumadim* in Palestine Place!'

'Well, he had at least some foundation for that,' said Reb Shemuel.

'Foundation! Do you call that foundation? because I lived there for a week, hunting out their customs and their ways of ensnaring the souls of our brethren, so that I might write about them one day. Have I not already told you not a morsel of their food passed my lips, and that the money which I had to take so as not to excite suspicion I distributed in charity among the poor Jews? Why not? From pigs we take bristles.'

'Still, you must remember that if you had not

been such a saint and such a great poet, I might myself have believed that you sold your soul for money to escape starvation. I know how these devils set their baits for the helpless immigrant, offering bread in return for a lip-conversion. They are grown so cunning now, they print their hellish appeals in Hebrew, knowing we reverence the holy tongue.'

'Yes; the ordinary Man-of-the-Earth believes everything that's in Hebrew. That was the mistake of the Apostles—to write in Greek. But, then, they too were such Men-of-the-Earth.'

'I wonder who writes such good Hebrew for the missionaries,' said Reb Shemuel.

'I wonder!' gurgled Pinchas, deep in his coffee.

'But, father,' asked Hannah, 'don't you believe any Jew ever really believes in Christianity?'

'How is it possible?' answered Reb Shemuel. 'A Jew who has the Law from Sinai, the Law that will never be changed, to whom God has given a sensible religion and common-sense—how can such a person believe in the farrago of nonsense that makes up the worship of the Christians? No Jew has ever apostatized except to fill his purse or his stomach, or to avoid persecution. Getting grace, they call it in English; but with poor Jews it is always grace

after meals. Look at the crypto-Jews, the Marranos, who for centuries lived a double life, outwardly Christians, but handing down secretly from generation to generation the faith, the traditions, the observances of Judaism.'

'Yes, no Jew was ever fool enough to turn Christian unless he was a clever man,' said the poet paradoxically. 'Have you not, my sweet, innocent young lady, heard the story of the two Jews in Moscow Cathedral?'

'No; what is it?' said Levi eagerly.

'Well, pass my cup up to your highly superior mother, who is waiting to fill it with coffee. Your eminent father knows the story—I can see by the twinkle in his learned eye.'

'Yes, that story has a beard,' said the Reb.

'Two Spanish Jews,' said the poet, addressing himself deferentially to Levi, 'who had got grace, were waiting to be baptized at Burgos Cathedral. There was a great throng of Catholics, and a special Cardinal was coming to conduct the ceremony, for their conversion was a great triumph. But the Cardinal was late, and the Jews fumed and fretted at the delay. The shadows of evening were falling on vault and transept. At last one turned to the other, and said, "Knowest thou what, Moses? If the holy father does not arrive soon, we shall be too late to say *Minchah*."'

Levi laughed heartily; the reference to the Jewish afternoon prayer went home to him.

'That story sums up in a nutshell the whole history of the great movement for the conversion of the Jews. We dip ourselves in baptismal water and wipe ourselves with a *Talith*. We are not a race to be lured out of the fixed feelings of countless centuries by the empty spirituality of a religion in which—as I soon found out when I lived among the soul-dealers—its very professors no longer believe. We are too fond of solid things,' said the poet, upon whom a good breakfast was beginning to produce a soothing, materialistic effect. 'Do you know that anecdote about the two Jews in the Transvaal?' Pinchas went on. 'That's a real *Chine*.'

'I don't think I know that *Maaseh*,' said Reb Shemuel.

'Oh, the two Jews had made a *trek*, and were travelling onwards exploring unknown country. One night they were sitting by their camp-fire playing cards, when suddenly one threw up his cards, tore his hair, and beat his breast in terrible agony. "What's the matter?" cried the other. "Woe, woe!" said the first. "To-day was the Day of Atonement, and we have eaten and gone on as usual!" "Oh, don't take on so," said his friend. "After all, Heaven will take into consideration that we lost count of the Jewish

calendar and didn't mean to be so wicked. And we can make up for it by fasting to-morrow." "Oh no, not for me!" said the first. "To-day was the Day of Atonement."'

All laughed, the Reb appreciating most keenly the sly dig at his race. He had a kindly sense of human frailty. Jews are very fond of telling stories against themselves—for their sense of humour is too strong not to be aware of their own foibles—but they tell them with closed doors, and resent them from the outside. They chastise themselves because they love themselves, as members of the same family insult one another. The secret is, that insiders understand the limitations of the criticism, which outsiders are apt to take in bulk. No race in the world possesses a richer anecdotal lore than the Jews—such pawky, even blasphemous humour, not understandable of the heathen; and, to a suspicious mind, Pinchas's overflowing cornucopia of such would have suggested a prior period of Continental wandering from town to town, like the *Minnesingers* of the Middle Ages, repaying the hospitality of his Jewish entertainers with a budget of good stories and gossip from the scenes of his pilgrimages.

'Do you know the story,' he went on, encouraged by Simcha's smiling face, 'of the old Rav and the *Havdalah?* His wife left town for

a few days, and when she returned the Rav took out a bottle of wine, poured some into the consecration cup, and began to recite the blessing. "What art thou doing?" demanded his wife, in amaze. "I am making *Havdalah*," replied the Rav. "But it is not the conclusion of a Festival to-night," she said. "Oh yes, it is," he answered. "My Festival's over. You've come back."'

The Reb laughed so much over this story that Simcha's brow grew as the solid Egyptian darkness, and Pinchas perceived he had made a mistake.

'But listen to the end,' he said, with a creditable impromptu. 'The wife said, "No, you're mistaken. Your Festival's only beginning. You get no supper. It's the commencement of the Day of Atonement."'

Simcha's brow cleared, and the Reb laughed heartily.

'But I don't see the point, father,' said Levi.

'Point! Listen, my son. First of all, he was to have a Day of Atonement, beginning with no supper, for his sin of rudeness to his faithful wife. Secondly, dost thou not know that with us the Day of Atonement is called a Festival, because we rejoice at the Creator's goodness in giving us the privilege of fasting? That's it, Pinchas, isn't it?'

'Yes, that's the point of the story, and I think the Rebbitzin had the best of it, eh?'

'Rebbitzins always have the last word,' said the Reb. 'But did I tell you the story of the woman who asked me a question the other day? She brought me a fowl in the morning, and said that in cutting open the gizzard she had found a rusty pin, which the fowl must have swallowed. She wanted to know whether the fowl might be eaten. It was a very difficult point, for how could you tell whether the pin had in any way contributed to the fowl's death? I searched the *Shass* and a heap of *Shaaloth Shuvoth*. I went and consulted the Maggid, and Sugarman the Shadchan, and Mr. Karlkammer, and at last we decided that the fowl was *tripha* and could not be eaten. So the same evening I sent for the woman, and, when I told her of our decision, she burst into tears and wrung her hands. "Do not grieve so," I said, taking compassion upon her; "I will buy thee another fowl." But she wept on uncomforted. "Oh, woe! woe!" she cried. "We ate it all up yesterday!"'

Pinchas was convulsed with laughter. Recovering himself, he lit his half-smoked cigar without asking leave.

'I thought it would turn out differently,' he said—'like that story of the peacock. A man had one presented to him, and as this is such

rare diet, he went to the Rav to ask if it was *kosher*. The Rabbi said "No," and confiscated the peacock. Later on, the man heard that the Rabbi had given a banquet, at which his peacock was the crowning dish. He went to the Rabbi, and reproached him. "*I* may eat it," replied the Rabbi, "because my father considers it permitted, and we may always go by what some eminent Son of the Law decides. But you, unfortunately, came to *me* for an opinion, and the permissibility of peacock is a point on which I have always disagreed with my father."'

Hannah seemed to find peculiar enjoyment in the story.

'Anyhow,' concluded Pinchas, 'you have a more pious flock than the Rabbi of my native place, who one day announced to his congregation that he was going to resign. Startled, they sent to him a delegate, who asked, in the name of the congregation, why he was leaving them. "Because," answered the Rabbi, "this is the first question anyone has ever asked me!"'

'Tell Mr. Pinchas your repartee about the donkey,' said Hannah, smiling.

'Oh no, it's not worth while,' said the Reb.

'Thou art always so backward with thine own,' cried the Rebbitzin warmly. 'Last Purim an impudent of face sent my husband a donkey made of sugar. My husband had a Rabbi

baked in gingerbread, and sent it in exchange to the donor, with the inscription, " A Rabbi sends a Rabbi" !'

Reb Shemuel laughed heartily, hearing this afresh at the lips of his wife. But Pinchas was bent double, like a convulsive note of interrogation.

The clock on the mantelshelf began to strike nine. Levi jumped to his feet.

'I shall be late for school !' he cried, making for the door.

'Stop ! stop !' shouted his father. 'Thou hast not yet said grace.'

'Oh yes, I have, father. While you were all telling stories I was *benshing* quietly to myself.'

'Is Saul also among the prophets? is Levi also among the story-tellers ?' murmured Pinchas to himself. Aloud he said : 'The child speaks truth. I saw his lips moving.'

Levi gave the poet a grateful look, snatched up his satchel, and ran off to No. 1, Royal Street. Pinchas followed him soon, inwardly upbraiding Reb Shemuel for meanness. He had only as yet had his breakfast for his book. Perhaps it was Simcha's presence that was to blame. She was the Reb's right hand, and he did not care to let her know what his left was doing.

He retired to his study when Pinchas de-

parted, and the Rebbitzin clattered about with a besom.

The study was a large square room lined with book-shelves, and hung with portraits of the great Continental Rabbis. The books were bibliographical monsters to which the Family Bibles of the Christian are mere pocket-books. They were all printed purely with the consonants, the vowels being divined grammatically or known by heart. In each there was an island of text in a sea of commentary, itself lost in an ocean of super-commentary that was bordered by a continent of super-super-commentary. Reb Shemuel knew many of these immense folios—with all their tortuous windings of argument and anecdote—much as the child knows the village it was born in, the crooked byways and the field-paths. Such-and-such a Rabbi gave such-and-such an opinion on such-and-such a line from the bottom of such-and-such a page—his memory of it was a visual picture. And just as the child does not connect its native village with the broader world without, does not trace its streets and turnings till they lead to the great towns, does not inquire as to its origins and its history, does not view it in relation to other villages, to the country, to the continent, to the world, but loves it for itself and in itself, so Reb Shemuel regarded and reverenced and

loved these gigantic pages, with their serried battalions of varied type. They were facts—absolute as the globe itself—regions of wisdom, perfect and self-sufficing. A little obscure here and there, perhaps, and in need of amplification or explication for inferior intellects—a half-finished manuscript commentary on one of the super-commentaries, to be called 'The Garden of Lilies,' was lying open on Reb Shemuel's own desk—but yet the only true encyclopædia of things terrestrial and divine. And, indeed, they were wonderful books. It was as difficult to say what was not in them as what was. Through them the old Rabbi held communion with his God, whom he loved with all his heart and soul, and thought of as a genial Father, watching tenderly over His froward children, and chastising them because He loved them. Generations of saints and scholars linked Reb Shemuel with the marvels of Sinai. The infinite network of ceremonial never hampered his soul; it was his joyous privilege to obey his Father in all things, and, like the king who offered to reward the man who invented a new pleasure, he was ready to embrace the sage who could deduce a new commandment. He rose at four every morning to study, and snatched every odd moment he could during the day. Rabbi Meir, that ancient ethical teacher, wrote: 'Whosoever

labours in the Torah for its own sake, the whole world is indebted to him; he is called friend, beloved, a lover of the All-present, a lover of mankind: it clothes him in meekness and reverence; it fits him to become just, pious, upright, and faithful; he becomes modest, long-suffering, and forgiving of insult.'

Reb Shemuel would have been scandalized if anyone had applied these words to him.

At about eleven o'clock Hannah came into the room, an open letter in her hand.

'Father,' she said, 'I have just had a letter from Mr. Samuel Levine.'

'Your husband?' he said, looking up with a smile.

'My husband,' she replied, with a fainter smile.

'And what does he say?'

'It isn't a very serious letter. He only wants to reassure me that he is coming back by Sunday week to be divorced by you.'

'All right. Tell him I won't charge him any fee,' he said, with the foreign accent that made him somehow seem more lovable to his daughter when he spoke English.

'He'll take that for granted,' Hannah replied. 'Fathers are expected to do these little things for their own children.'

'Yes, I would marry you with pleasure,' said Reb Shemuel; 'but divorce is another

matter. I shall not even get back the dowry.'

'And you really think I am Sam Levine's wife?'

'How many times shall I tell you? Some authorities do take the *intention* into account, but the letter of the law is clearly against you. It is far safer to be formally divorced.'

'Then, if he were to die——'

'Save us and grant us peace!' interrupted the Reb in horror.

'I should be his widow.'

'Yes, I suppose you would. But what *Narrischkeit!* Why should he die? It isn't as if you were really married to him,' said the Reb, his eye twinkling.

'But isn't it all absurd, father?'

'Do not talk so,' said Reb Shemuel, resuming his gravity. 'Is it absurd that you should be scorched if you play with fire?'

Hannah did not reply to the question.

'You never told me how you got on at Manchester,' she said. 'Did you settle the dispute satisfactorily?'

'Oh yes,' said the Reb; 'but it was very difficult. Both parties were so envenomed, and it seems that the feud has been going on in the congregation ever since the Day of Atonement, when the minister refused to blow the *Shofar*

three minutes too early, as the president requested. The treasurer sided with the minister, and there has almost been a split.'

'The sounding of the New Year trumpet seems often to be the signal for war,' said Hannah sarcastically.

'It is so,' said the Reb sadly.

'And how did you repair the breach?'

'Just by laughing at both sides. They would have turned a deaf ear to reasoning. I told them that Midrash about Jacob's journey to Laban.'

'What is that?'

'Oh, it's an amplification of the Biblical narrative. The verse in Genesis says that he lighted on the place, and he put up there for the night because the sun had set, and he took of the stones of the place, and he made them into pillows. But later on it says that he rose up in the morning, and he took *the* stone which he had put as his pillows. Now, what is the explanation?' Reb Shemuel's tone became momently more sing-song. 'In the night the stones quarrelled for the honour of supporting the patriarch's head, and so by a miracle they were turned into one stone to satisfy them all. Now, you remember that when Jacob arose in the morning, he said: How fearful is this place! this is none other than the house of God. So I said to the wranglers: Why did Jacob say

that? He said it because his rest had been so disturbed by the quarrelling stones that it reminded him of the house of God, the synagogue. I pointed out how much better it would be if they ceased their quarrellings and became one stone. And so I made peace again in the *Kehillah*.'

'Till next year,' said Hannah, laughing. 'But, father, I have often wondered why they allow the ram's horn in the service. I thought all musical instruments were forbidden.'

'It is not a musical instrument in practice,' said the Reb, with evasive facetiousness. And, indeed, the performers were nearly always incompetent, marring the solemnity of great moments by asthmatic wheezings and thin far-away tootlings.

'But it would be if we had trained trumpeters,' persisted Hannah, smiling.

'If you really want the explanation, it is that, since the fall of the second Temple, we have dropped out of our worship all musical instruments connected with the old Temple worship, especially such as have become associated with Christianity. But the ram's horn on the New Year is an institution older than the Temple, and specially enjoined in the Bible.'

'But surely there is something spiritualizing about an organ?'

For reply the Reb pinched her ear.

'Ah, you are a sad *Epikouros*,' he said half seriously. 'If you loved God, you would not want an organ to take your thoughts to heaven.'

He released her ear and took up his pen, humming with unction a synagogue air full of joyous flourishes.

Hannah turned to go, then turned back.

'Father,' she said nervously, blushing a little, 'who was that you said you had in your eye?'

'Oh, nobody in particular,' said the Reb, equally embarrassed, and avoiding meeting her eye, as if to conceal the person in his.

'But you must have meant something by it,' she said gravely. 'You know I'm not going to be married off to please—other people.'

The Reb wriggled uncomfortably in his chair.

'It was only a thought, an idea. If it does not come to you, too, it shall be nothing. I didn't mean anything serious; really, my dear, I didn't. To tell the truth'—he finished suddenly, with a frank, heavenly smile—'the person I had mainly in my eye when I spoke was your mother.'

This time his eye met hers, and they smiled at each other with the consciousness of the humours of the situation. The Rebbitzin's broom was heard banging viciously in the

passage. Hannah bent down and kissed the ample forehead beneath the black skull-cup.

'Mr. Levine also writes insisting that I must go to the Purim ball with him and Leah,' she said, glancing at the letter.

'A husband's wishes must be obeyed,' answered the Reb.

'No, I will treat him as if he were really my husband,' retorted Hannah. 'I will have my own way. I shan't go.'

The door was thrown open suddenly.

'Oh yes, thou wilt,' said the Rebbitzin. 'Thou art not going to bury thyself alive.'

CHAPTER VIII.

ESTHER AND HER CHILDREN.

ESTHER ANSELL did not welcome Levi Jacobs warmly. She had just cleared away the breakfast things, and was looking forward to a glorious day's reading, and the advent of a visitor did not gratify her. And yet Levi Jacobs was a good-looking boy, with brown hair and eyes, a dark glowing complexion and ruddy lips—a sort of reduced masculine edition of Hannah.

'I've come to play I-spy-I, Solomon,' he said when he entered. 'My, don't you live high up!'

'I thought you had to go to school,' Solomon observed with a stare.

'Ours isn't a board school,' Levi explained. 'You might introduce a fellow to your sister.'

'Garn! You know Esther right enough,' said Solomon, and began to whistle carelessly.

'How are you, Esther?' said Levi awkwardly.

'I'm very well, thank you,' said Esther, looking up from a little brown-covered book, and looking down at it again.

She was crouching on the fender, trying to get some warmth at the little fire extracted from Reb Shemuel's half-crown. December continued gray; the room was dim, and a spurt of flame played on her pale, earnest face. It was a face that never lost a certain ardency of colour even at its palest; the hair was dark and abundant, the eyes were large and thoughtful, the nose slightly aquiline, and the whole cast of the features betrayed the Polish origin. The forehead was rather low. Esther had nice teeth, which accident had preserved white. It was an arrestive rather than a beautiful face, though charming enough when she smiled. If the grace and candour of childhood could have been disengaged from the face, it would have been easier to say whether it was absolutely pretty. It came nearer being so on Sabbaths and holidays, when scholastic supervision was removed, and the hair was free to fall loosely about the shoulders instead of being screwed up into the pendulous plait so dear to the educational eye. Esther could have earned a penny quite easily by sacrificing her tresses, and going about with close-cropped head like a boy, for her teacher never failed thus to reward the shorn, but in the

darkest hours of hunger she held on to her hair as her mother had done before her. The prospects of Esther's post-nuptial wig were not brilliant. She was not tall for a girl who is getting on for twelve; but some little girls shoot up suddenly, and there was considerable room for hope.

Sarah and Isaac were romping noisily about and under the beds; Rachel was at the table, knitting a scarf for Solomon; the grandmother pored over a bulky enchiridion for pious women, written in jargon. Moses was out in search of work. No one took any notice of the visitor.

'What's that you're reading?' he asked Esther politely.

'Oh, nothing,' said Esther with a start, closing the book, as if fearful he might want to look over her shoulder.

'I don't see the fun of reading books out of school,' said Levi.

'Oh, but we don't read school books,' said Solomon defensively.

'I don't care. It's stupid.'

'At that rate you could never read books when you're grown up,' said Esther contemptuously.

'No, of course not,' admitted Levi; 'otherwise where would be the fun of being grown up? After I leave school I don't intend to open a book.'

'No? Perhaps you'll open a shop,' said Solomon.

'What will you do when it rains?' asked Esther crushingly.

'I shall smoke,' replied Levi loftily.

'Yes, but suppose it's Shabbos?' swiftly rejoined Esther.

Levi was nonplussed. 'Well, it can't rain all day, and there are only fifty-two Sabbaths in the year,' he said lamely. 'A man can always do something.'

'I think there's more pleasure in reading than in doing something,' remarked Esther.

'Yes, you're a girl,' Levi reminded her, 'and girls are expected to stay indoors. Look at my sister Hannah; she reads too. But a man can be out doing what he pleases, eh, Solomon?'

'Yes, of course we've got the best of it,' said Solomon; 'the Prayer-Book shows that. Don't I say every morning, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, who hast not made me a woman"?'

'I don't know whether you do say it. You certainly have got to,' said Esther witheringly.

'Sh!' said Solomon, winking in the direction of the grandmother.

'It doesn't matter,' said Esther calmly. 'She can't understand what I'm saying.'

'I don't know,' said Solomon dubiously.

'She sometimes catches more than you bargain for.'

'And then *you* catch more than you bargain for,' said Rachel, looking up roguishly from her knitting.

Solomon stuck his tongue in his cheek and grimaced.

Isaac came behind Levi and gave his coat a pull, and toddled off with a yell of delight.

'Be quiet, Ikey!' cried Esther. 'If you don't behave better I shan't sleep in your new bed.'

'Oh yeth, you mutht, Ethty,' lisped Ikey, his elfish face growing grave. He went about depressed for some seconds.

'Kids are a beastly nuisance,' said Levi; 'don't you think so, Esther?'

'Oh no, not always,' said the little girl. 'Besides, we were all kids once!'

'That's what I complain of,' said Levi. 'We ought all to be born grown-up.'

'But that's impossible!' put in Rachel.

'It isn't impossible at all,' said Esther. 'Look at Adam and Eve!'

Levi looked at Esther gratefully instead. He felt nearer to her, and thought of persuading her into playing kiss-in-the-ring. But he found it difficult to back out of his undertaking to play I-spy-I with Solomon; and in the end he had to leave Esther to her book.

She had little in common with her brother Solomon, least of all humour and animal spirits. Even before the responsibilities of headship had come upon her, she was a preternaturally thoughtful little girl who had strange intuitions about things, and was doomed to work out her own salvation as a metaphysician. When she asked her mother who made God, a slap in the face demonstrated to her the limits of human inquiry. The natural instinct of the child overrode the long travail of the race to conceive an abstract Deity, and Esther pictured God as a Mammoth cloud. In early years Esther imagined that the 'body' that was buried when a person died was the corpse decapitated, and she often puzzled herself to think what was done with the isolated head. When her mother was being sewn up in grave-clothes, Esther hovered about with a real thirst for knowledge, while the thoughts of all the other children were sensuously concentrated on the funeral and the glory of seeing a vehicle drive away from their own door. Esther was also disappointed at not seeing her mother's soul fly up to heaven, though she watched vigilantly at the death-bed for the ascent of the long, yellow, hook-shaped thing. The genesis of this conception of the soul was probably to be sought in the pictorial representations of ghosts in the story papers brought

home by her eldest brother, Benjamin. Strange shadowy conceptions of things more corporeal floated up from her solitary reading. Theatres she came across often, and a theatre was a kind of Babel plain or Vanity Fair, in which performers and spectators were promiscuously mingled, and wherein the richer folk, clad in evening dress, sat in thin deal boxes—the cases in Spitalfields Market being Esther's main association with boxes. One of her day-dreams of the future was going to the theatre in a night-gown, and being accommodated with an orange-box.

Little rectification of such distorted views of life was to be expected from Moses Ansell, who went down to his grave without seeing even a circus, and had no interest in art apart from the *Police News* and his Mizrach and the synagogue decorations. Even when Esther's sceptical instinct drove her to inquire of her father how people knew that Moses got the Law on Mount Sinai, he could only repeat in horror that the books of Moses said so, and could never be brought to see that his arguments travelled on roundabouts. She sometimes regretted that her brilliant brother Benjamin had been swallowed up by the Orphan Asylum, for she imagined she could have discussed many a knotty point with him. Solomon was both flippant and incompe-

tent. But in spite of her theoretical latitudinarianism, in practice she was pious to the point of fanaticism, and could scarce conceive the depths of degradation of which she heard vague horror-struck talk. There were Jews about—grown-up men and women, not insane—who struck lucifer matches on the Sabbath, and housewives who carelessly mixed their butter-plates with their meat-plates, even when they did not actually eat butter with meat. Esther promised herself that, please God, she would never do anything so wicked when she grew up. She, at least, would never fail to light the Sabbath candles nor to *kasher* the meat. Never was child more alive to the beauty of duty, more open to the appeal of virtue, self-control, abnegation. She fasted till two o'clock on the Great White Fast when she was seven years old, and accomplished the perfect feat at nine. When she read a simple little story in a prize-book, inculcating the homely moralities at which the cynic sneers, her eyes filled with tears and her breast with unselfish and dutiful determinations. She had something of the temperament of the stoic, fortified by that spiritual pride which does not look for equal goodness in others; and though she disapproved of Solomon's dodgings of duty, she did not sneak or preach—even gave him surreptitious crusts or coffee before he had said his prayers, especially on

resided at night on sufferance. He could not even plead it was his by right of birth in it. But Isaac was not, after all, wholly given over to worldly thoughts, for an intellectual problem often occupied his thoughts and led him to slap little Sarah's arms. He had been born on the fourth of December, while Sarah had been born, a year later, on the third.

'It ain't, it can't be,' he would say. 'Your birfday can't be afore mine.'

''Tis, Esty thays so,' Sarah would reply.

'Esty's a liar,' Isaac responded imperturbably.

'Arx *Tatah*.'

'*Tatah* dunno. Ain't I five?'

'Yeth.'

'And ain't you four?'

'Yeth.'

'And ain't I older than you?'

'Courth.'

'And wasn't I born afore you?'

'Yeth, Ikey.'

'Then 'ow can your birfday come afore mine?'

'Cos it doth.'

'Stoopid!'

'It doth, arx Esty,' Sarah would insist.

'Than't teep in my new bed,' Ikey would threaten.

'Thall if I like.'

'Than't!'

Here Sarah would generally break down in tears, and Isaac with premature economic instinct, feeling it wicked to waste a cry, would proceed to justify it by hitting her. Thereupon little Sarah would hit him back and develop a terrible howl.

'Hi, woe is unto me,' she would wail in jargon, throwing herself on the ground in a corner and rocking herself to and fro, like her far-away ancestresses remembering Zion by the waters of Babylon.

Little Sarah's lamentations never ceased till she had been avenged by a higher hand. There were several great powers, but Esther was the most trusty instrument of reprisal. If Esther was out, little Sarah's sobs ceased speedily, for she, too, felt the folly of fruitless tears. Though she nursed in her breast the sense of injury, she would even resume her amicable romps with Isaac. But the moment the step of the avenger was heard on the stairs, little Sarah would betake herself to the corner and howl with the pain of Isaac's pummellings. She had a strong love of abstract justice, and felt that, if the wrong-doer were to go unpunished, there was no security for the constitution of things.

To-day's holiday did not pass without an outbreak of this sort. It occurred about tea-time.

Perhaps the infants were fractious because there was no tea. Esther had to economize her resources, and a repast at seven would serve for both tea and supper. Among the poor combination meals are as common as combination beds and chests. Esther had quieted Sarah by slapping Isaac, but as this made Isaac howl, the gain was dubious. She had to put a fresh piece of coal on the fire, and sing to them while their shadows contorted .themselves grotesquely on the beds and then upwards along the sloping walls, terminating with twisted necks on the ceiling.

Esther usually sang melancholy things in minor keys. They seemed most attuned to the dim, straggling room. There was a song her mother used to sing. It was taken from a Purim Spiel, itself based upon a Midrash, one of the endless legends with which the People of One Book have broidered it, amplifying every minute detail with all the exuberance of Oriental imagination, and justifying their fancies with all the ingenuity of a race of lawyers. After his brethren sold Joseph to the Midianite merchants, the lad escaped from the caravan and wandered footsore and hungry to Bethlehem, to the grave of his mother, Rachel. And he threw himself upon the ground and wept aloud, and sang to a heart-breaking melody in Yiddish :

'Und hei weh ist mir,
Wie schlecht ist doch mir,
Ich bin vertrieben geworen
Junger heid voon dir.'

Whereof the English runs :

'Alas ! woe is me !
How wretched to be
Driven away and banished,
Yet so young, from thee !'

Thereupon the voice of his beloved mother, Rachel, was heard from the grave, comforting him and bidding him be of good cheer, for that his future should be great and glorious.

Esther could not sing this without the tears trickling down her cheeks. Was it that she thought of her own dead mother and applied the lines to herself ? Isaac's ill-humour scarcely ever survived the anodyne of these mournful cadences. There was another melodious wail which Alte Belcovitch had brought from Poland. The chorus ran :

'Man nemt awek die chasanim voon die callohs,
Hi, hi, did-a-rid-a-ree !'

'They tear away their lovers from the maidens,
Hi, hi, did-a-rid-a-ree !'

The air mingled the melancholy of Polish music with the sadness of Jewish, and the words hinted of God knew what

'Old unhappy far-off things
And battles long ago.'

And so over all the songs and stories was the trail of tragedy; under all, the heartache of a hunted race. There are few more plaintive chants in the world than the recitation of the Psalms by the Sons of the Covenant on Sabbath afternoons amid the gathering shadows of twilight. Esther often stood in the passage to hear it, morbidly fascinated, tears of pensive pleasure in her eyes. Even the little jargon story-book, which Moses Ansell read out that night to his *Kinder* after tea-supper, by the light of the one candle, was prefaced with a note of pathos. 'These stories have we gathered together from the Gemorah and the Midrash, wonderful stories, and we have translated the beautiful stories, using the Hebrew alphabet, so that everyone, little or big, shall be able to read them, and shall know that there is a God in the world who forsaketh not His people Israel, and who even for us will likewise work miracles and wonders, and will send us the righteous Redeemer speedily in our days. Amen.'

Of this same Messiah the children heard endless tales. Oriental fancy had been exhausted in picturing Him for the consolation of exiled and suffering Israel. Before His days there would be a wicked Messiah of the house of Joseph;

later, a king with one ear, deaf to hear good, but acute to hear evil; there would be a scar on his forehead; one of his hands would be an inch long and the other three miles, apparently a subtle symbol of the persecutor. The jargon story-book, among its 'stories, wonderful stories,' had also extracts from the famous romance, or diary, of Eldad the Danite, who professed to have discovered the lost ten tribes. Eldad's book appeared towards the end of the ninth century, and became the 'Arabian Nights' of the Jews, and it had filtered down through the ages into the Ansell garret, in common with many other tales from the rich storehouse of mediæval folklore, in the diffusion of which the Wandering Jew has played so great a part.

Sometimes Moses read to his charmed hearers the descriptions of heaven and hell by Immanuel, the friend and contemporary of Dante, sometimes a jargon version of 'Robinson Crusoe.' To-night he chose Eldad's account of the tribe of Moses, dwelling beyond the wonderful river Sambatyon, which never flows on the Sabbath.

'There is also the tribe of Moses, our just master, which is called the tribe that flees, because it fled from idol worship and clung to the fear of God. A river flows round their land for a distance of four days' journey on every side. They dwell in beautiful houses provided

with handsome towers, which they have built themselves. There is nothing unclean among them, neither in the case of birds, venison, nor domesticated animals; there are no wild animals, no flies, no foxes, no vermin, no serpents, no dogs, and in general nothing which does harm; they have only sheep and cattle, which bear twice a year. They sow and reap; there are all sorts of gardens with all kinds of fruit and cereals, viz., beans, melons, gourds, onions, garlic, wheat and barley, and the seed grows a hundredfold. They have faith; they know the law, the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Agadah; but their Talmud is in Hebrew. They introduce their sayings in the name of the Fathers, the wise men, who heard them from the mouth of Joshua, who himself heard them from the mouth of God. They have no knowledge of the Tanaim (doctors of the Mishnah) and Amoraim (doctors of the Talmud), who flourished during the time of the second Temple, which was, of course, not known to these tribes. They speak only Hebrew, and are very strict as regards the use of wine made by others than themselves, as well as the rules of slaughtering animals; in this respect the law of Moses is much more rigorous than that of the tribes. They do not swear by the name of God, for fear that their breath may leave them, and they become angry

with those who swear; they reprimand them, saying, " Woe, ye poor, why do you swear with the mention of the name of God upon your lips? Use your mouth for eating bread and drinking water. Do you not know that for the sin of swearing your children die young?" And in this way they exhort everyone to serve God with fear and integrity of heart. Therefore the children of Moses, the servant of God, live long, to the age of one hundred or one hundred and twenty years. No child, be it son or daughter, dies during the lifetime of its parent, but they reach a third and a fourth generation, and see grandchildren and great-grandchildren with their offspring. They do all field-work themselves, having no male or female servants; there are also merchants among them. They do not close their houses at night, for there is no thief nor any wicked man among them. Thus a little lad might go for days with his flock without fear of robbers, demons, or danger of any other kind; they are indeed all holy and clean. These Levites busy themselves with the Law and with the commandments, and they still live in the holiness of our master, Moses; therefore God has given them all this good. Moreover, they see nobody and nobody sees them, except the four tribes who dwell on the other side of the rivers of Cush; they see them and speak to

them, but the river Sambatyon is between them, as it is said: "That thou mayest say to prisoners, Go forth" (Isaiah xlix. 9). They have plenty of gold and silver; they sow flax, and cultivate the crimson worm, and make beautiful garments. Their number is double or four times the number that went out from Egypt.

'The river Sambatyon is two hundred yards broad—"about as far as a bowshot" (Gen. xxi. 16)—full of sand and stones, but without water; the stones make a great noise like the waves of the sea and a stormy wind, so that in the night the noise is heard at a distance of half a day's journey. There are sources of water which collect themselves in one pool, out of which they water the fields. There are fish in it, and all kinds of clean birds fly round it. And this river of stone and sand rolls during the six working days, and rests on the Sabbath day. As soon as the Sabbath begins, fire surrounds the river, and the flames remain till the next evening, when the Sabbath ends. Thus no human being can reach the river for a distance of half a mile on either side: the fire consumes all that grows there. The four tribes, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher, stand on the borders of the river. When shearing their flocks here—for the land is flat and clean, without any thorns—if the

children of Moses see them gathered together on the border, they shout, saying, "Brethren, tribes of Jeshurum, show us your camels, dogs and asses," and they make their remarks about the length of the camel's neck and the shortness of the tail. Then they greet one another and go their way.'

When this was done, Solomon called for hell. He liked to hear about the punishment of the sinners; it gave a zest to life. Moses hardly needed a book to tell them about hell. It had no secrets for him. The Old Testament has no reference to a future existence, but the poor Jew has no more been able to live without the hope of hell than the poor Christian. When the wicked man has waxed fat and kicked the righteous skinny man, shall the two lie down in the same dust and the game be over? Perish the thought! One of the hells was that in which the sinner was condemned to do over and over again the sins he had done in life.

'Why, that must be jolly!' said Solomon.

'No, that is frightful,' maintained Moses Ansell.

He spoke Yiddish, the children English.

'Of course it is,' said Esther. 'Just fancy, Solomon, having to eat toffy all day!'

'It's better than eating nothing all day,' replied Solomon.

'But to eat it every day for ever and ever!' said Moses. 'There's no rest for the wicked.'

'What! not even on the Sabbath?' said Esther.

'Oh yes, of course then. Like the river Sambatyon, even the flames of hell rest on Shabbos.'

'Haven't they got no *fire-goyahs?*' inquired Ikey, and everybody laughed.

'Shabbos is a holiday in hell,' Moses explained to the little one. 'So thou seest the result of thy making out Sabbath too early on Saturday night; thou sendest the poor souls back to their tortures before the proper time.'

Moses never lost an opportunity of enforcing the claims of the ceremonial law. Esther had a vivid picture flashed upon her of poor yellow hook-shaped souls floating sullenly back towards the flames.

Solomon's chief respect for his father sprang from the halo of military service encircling Moses ever since it leaked out through the lips of the *Bube* that he had been a conscript in Russia and been brutally treated by the sergeant. But Moses could not be got to speak of his exploits. Solomon pressed him to do so, especially when his father gave symptoms of inviting him to the study of Gemorah. To-night Moses brought out the big book, and said:

'Come, Solomon, enough of stories. We must learn a little.'

'To-day is a holiday,' grumbled Solomon.

'It is never a holiday for the study of the Law.'

'Only this once, father; let's play draughts.'

Moses weakly yielded. Draughts was his sole relaxation, and when Solomon acquired a draughtboard by barter, his father taught him the game. Moses played the Polish variety, in which the men are like English kings, that leap backwards and forwards, and the kings shoot diagonally across, like bishops at chess. Solomon could not withstand these gigantic grasshoppers, whose stopping-places he could never anticipate. Moses won every game to-night, and was full of glee, and told the *Kinder* another story. It was about the Emperor Nicholas, and is not to be found in the official histories of Russia.

'Nicholas was a wicked king, who oppressed the Jews, and made their lives sore and bitter. And one day he made it known to the Jews that, if a million roubles were not raised for him in a month's time, they should be driven from their homes. Then the Jews prayed unto God, and besought Him to help them for the merits of the forefathers, but no help came. Then they tried to bribe the officials; but the officials pocketed their gold, and the Emperor still demanded his

tax. Then they went to the great Masters of Cabalah, and they said, "Can ye do naught for us?" Then the Masters of Cabalah took counsel together, and at midnight they called up the spirits of Abraham our father, and Isaac and Jacob, and Elijah the Prophet, who wept to hear of their children's sorrows. And Abraham our father, and Isaac and Jacob, and Elijah the Prophet, took the bed whereon Nicholas the Emperor slept, and transported it to a wild place. And they took Nicholas the Emperor out of his warm bed, and whipped him soundly, so that he yelled for mercy. Then they asked: "Wilt thou rescind the edict against the Jews?" And he said, "I will." But in the morning Nicholas the Emperor woke up and called for the chief of the bed-chamber, and said: "How darest thou allow my bed to be carried out in the middle of the night into the forest?" And the chief of the bed-chamber grew pale, and said that the Emperor's guards had watched all night outside the door; neither was there space for the bed to pass out. And Nicholas the Emperor, thinking he had dreamed, let the man go unhung. But the next night, lo! the bed was transported again to the wild place, and Abraham our father, and Isaac and Jacob, and Elijah the Prophet, drubbed him doubly, and again he promised to remit the tax. So in the morning the chief of

the bed-chamber was hanged, and at night the guards were doubled. But the bed sailed away to the wild place, and Nicholas the Emperor was trebly whipped. Then Nicholas the Emperor annulled the edict, and the Jews rejoiced, and fell at the knees of the Masters of Cabalah.'

'But why can't they save the Jews altogether?' queried Esther.

'Ah!' said Moses mysteriously, 'Cabalah is a great force, and must not be abused. The Holy Name must not be mentioned too often.'

'Could the Masters make men?' inquired Esther, who had recently come across Frankenstein.

'Certainly,' said Moses. 'And, what is more, it stands written that Rav Chanina and Rav Osheya fashioned a fine fat calf on Friday, and enjoyed it on the Sabbath.'

'Oh, father!' said Solomon piteously. 'Don't you know Cabalah?'

CHAPTER IX.

DUTCH DEBBY.

A YEAR before we got to know Esther Ansell she got to know Dutch Debby, and it changed her life. Dutch Debby was a tall, sallow, ungainly girl, who lived in the wee back-room on the second floor behind Mrs. Simons, and supported herself and her dog by needlework. Nobody ever came to see her, for it was whispered that her parents had cast her out when she presented them with an illegitimate grandchild. The baby was fortunate enough to die, but she still continued to incur suspicion by keeping a dog, which is an un-Jewish trait. Bobby often squatted on the stairs guarding her door, and, as it was very dark on the staircase, Esther suffered great agonies lest she should tread on his tail and provoke reprisals. Her anxiety led her to do so one afternoon, and Bobby's teeth just penetrated through her stocking. The clamour brought out Dutch Debby, who took the girl

into her room and soothed her. Esther had often wondered what uncanny mysteries lay behind that dark, dog-guarded door, and she was rather more afraid of Debby than of Bobby.

But that afternoon saw the beginning of a friendship which added one to the many factors which were moulding the future woman. For Debby turned out a very mild bogie indeed, with a good English vocabulary and a stock of old *London Journals* more precious to Esther than mines of Ind. Debby kept them under the bed, which, as the size of the bed all but coincided with the area of the room, was a wise arrangement. And on the long summer evenings and the Sunday afternoons when her little ones needed no looking after and were traipsing about playing 'Whoop!' and pussy-cat in the street downstairs, Esther slipped into the wee back-room, where the treasures lay, and there, by the open window overlooking the dingy backyard and the slanting perspectives of sun-flecked red tiles where cats prowled and dingy sparrows hopped, in an atmosphere laden with whiffs from a neighbouring dairyman's stables, Esther lost herself in wild tales of passion and romance. She frequently read them aloud for the benefit of the sallow-faced needlewoman, who had found romance square so sadly with the realities of her

own existence. And so all a summer afternoon, Dutch Debby and Esther would be rapt away to a world of brave men and fair women, a world of fine linen and purple, of champagne and wickedness and cigarettes, a world where nobody worked or washed shirts or was hungry or had holes in boots, a world utterly ignorant of Judaism and the heinousness of eating meat with butter. Not that Esther for her part correlated her conception of this world with facts. She never realized that it was an actually possible world — never, indeed, asked herself whether it existed outside print or not. She never thought of it in that way at all, any more than it ever occurred to her that people once spoke the Hebrew she learnt to read and translate. Bobby was often present at these readings, but he kept his thoughts to himself, sitting on his hind-legs with his delightfully ugly nose tilted up inquiringly at Esther. For the best of all this new friendship was that Bobby was not jealous. He was only a sorry dun-coloured mongrel to outsiders, but Esther learnt to see him almost through Dutch Debby's eyes. And she could run up the stairs freely, knowing that if she trod on his tail now, he would take it as a mark of *camaraderie*.

'I used to pay a penny a week for the *London Journal*,' said Debby early in their acquaintance-

ship, 'till one day I discovered I had a dreadful bad memory.'

'And what was the good of that?' asked Esther.

'Why, it was worth shillings and shillings to me. You see, I used to save up all the back numbers of the *London Journal*, because of the answers to correspondents, telling you how to do your hair and trim your nails and give yourself a nice complexion. I used to bother my head about that sort of thing in those days, dear; and one day I happened to get reading a story in a back number, only about a year old, and I found I was just as interested as if I had never read it before, and I hadn't the slightest remembrance of it. After that I left off buying the *Journal*, and took to reading my big heap of back numbers. I get through them once every two years.' Debby interrupted herself with a fit of coughing, for lengthy monologue is inadvisable for persons who bend over needlework in dark back rooms. Recovering herself, she added, 'And then I start afresh. You couldn't do that, could you?'

'No,' admitted Esther, with a painful feeling of inferiority. 'I remember all I've ever read.'

'Ah, you will grow up a clever woman,' said Debby, patting her hair.

'Oh, do you think so?' said Esther, her dark eyes lighting up with pleasure.

'Oh yes; you're always first in your class, ain't you?'

'Is that what you judge by, Debby?' said Esther, disappointed. 'The other girls are so stupid, and take no thought for anything but their hats and their frocks. They would rather play gobs or shuttlecock or hopscotch than read about the "Forty Thieves." They don't mind being kept a whole year in one class, but I—oh, I feel so mad at getting on so slow! I could easily learn the standard work in three months. I want to know everything, so that I can grow up to be a teacher at our school.'

'And does your teacher know everything?'

'Oh yes! She knows the meaning of every word and all about foreign countries.'

'And would you like to be a teacher?'

'If I could only be clever enough!' sighed Esther. 'But then, you see, the teachers at our school are real ladies, and they dress, oh, so beautifully! with fur tippets and six-buttoned gloves. I could never afford it, for even when I was earning five shillings a week I should have to give most of it to father and the children.'

'But if you're very good I dare say some of

the great ladies like the Rothschilds will buy you nice clothes ; I have heard they are very good to clever children.'

'No ; then the other teachers would know I was getting charity! And they would mock at me. I heard Miss Hyams make fun of a teacher because she wore the same dress as last winter. I don't think I should like to be a teacher, after all, though it is nice to be able to stand with your back to the fire in the winter. The girls would know——' Esther stopped and blushed.

'Would know what, dear?'

'Well, they would know father,' said Esther, in low tones. 'They would see him selling things in the Lane, and they wouldn't do what I told them.'

'Nonsense, Esther! I believe most of the teachers' fathers are just as bad—I mean as poor. Look at Miss Hyams's own father.'

'Oh, Debby! I do hope that's true. Besides, when I was earning five shillings a week I could buy father a new coat, couldn't I? And then there would be no need for him to stand in the Lane with lemons or "four-corner" fringes, would there?'

'No, dear. You shall be a teacher, I prophecy ; and—who knows?—some day you may be head-mistress!'

Esther laughed a startled little laugh of delight, with a suspicion of a sob in it.

'What, me! Me go round and make all the teachers do their work! Oh, wouldn't I catch them gossiping! I know their tricks!'

'You seem to look after your teacher well. Do you ever call her over the coals for gossiping?' inquired Dutch Debby, amused.

'No, no,' protested Esther, quite seriously. 'I like to hear them gossiping. When my teacher and Miss Davis, who's in the next room, and a few other teachers get together, I learn, oh, such a lot from their conversation!'

'Then they do teach you, after all,' laughed Debby.

'Yes, but it's not on the time-table,' said Esther, shaking her little head sapiently. 'It's mostly about young men. Did you ever have a young man, Debby?'

'Don't—don't ask such questions, child!'

Debby bent over her needlework.

'Why not?' persisted Esther. 'If I only had a young man when I grew up, I should be proud of him. Yes, you're trying to turn your head away. I'm sure you had. Was he nice, like Lord Eversmonde, or Captain Andrew Sinclair? Why, you're crying, Debby!'

'Don't be a little fool, Esther! A tiny fly

has just flown into my eye, poor little thing! He hurts me, and does himself no good.'

'Let me see, Debby!' said Esther. 'Perhaps I shall be in time to save him.'

'No, don't trouble.'

'Don't be so cruel, Debby. You're as bad as Solomon, who pulls off flies' wings to see if they can fly without them.'

'He's dead now. Go on with "Lady Ann's Rival." We've been wasting the whole afternoon talking. Take my advice, Esther, and don't stuff your head with ideas about young men. You're too young. Now, dear, I'm ready. Go on.'

'Where was I? Oh yes. "Lord Eversmonde folded the fair young form to his manly bosom, and pressed kiss after kiss upon her ripe young lips, which responded passionately to his own. At last she recovered herself, and cried reproachfully: 'Oh, Sigismund, why do you persist in coming here when the duke forbids it?'" Oh, do you know, Debby, father said the other day I oughtn't to come here.'

'Oh no, you must!' cried Debby impulsively. 'I couldn't part with you now.'

'Father says people say you are not good,' said Esther candidly.

Debby breathed painfully.

'Well!' she whispered.

'But I said people were liars. You *are* good!'

'Oh, Esther, Esther!' sobbed Debby, kissing the earnest little face with a vehemence that surprised the child.

'I think father only said that,' Esther went on, 'because he fancies I neglect Sarah and Isaac when he's at *Shool*, and they quarrel so about their birthdays when they're together. But they don't slap one another hard. I'll tell you what. Suppose I bring Sarah down here!'

'Well, but won't she cry and be miserable here if you read, and with no Isaac to play with?'

'Oh no,' said Esther confidently. 'She'll keep Bobby company.'

Bobby took kindly to little Sarah also. He knew no other dogs, and in such circumstances a sensible animal falls back on human beings. He had first met Debby herself quite casually, and the two lonely beings took to each other. Before that meeting Dutch Debby was subject to wild temptations. Once she half starved herself and put aside ninepence a week for almost three months, and purchased one-eighth of a lottery ticket from Sugarman the Shadchan, who recognised her existence for the occasion. The fortune did not come off.

Debby saw less and less of Esther as the months crept on again towards winter, for the little girl feared her hostess might feel constrained to offer her food, and the children

required more soothing. Esther would say very little about her home-life, though Debby got to know a great deal about her school-mates and her teacher.

One summer evening, after Esther had passed into the hands of Miss Miriam Hyams, she came to Dutch Debby with a grave face, and said:

'Oh, Debby, Miss Hyams is not a heroine.'

'No?' said Debby, amused. 'You were so charmed with her at first.'

'Yes, she is very pretty, and her hats are lovely; but she is not a heroine.'

'Why, what's happened?'

'You know what lovely weather it's been all day?'

'Yes.'

'Well, this morning, all in the middle of the Scripture lesson, she said to us: "What a pity, girls, we've got to stay cooped up here this bright weather!"—you know she chats to us so nicely. "In some schools they have half-holidays on Wednesday afternoons in the summer. Wouldn't it be nice if we could have them, and be out in the sunshine in Victoria Park?" "Hoo, yes, teacher, wouldn't that be jolly!" we all cried. Then teacher said: "Well, why not ask the head-mistress for a holiday this afternoon? You're the highest standard in the school. I

dare say if you ask for it the whole school will get a holiday. Who will be spokeswoman?" Then all the girls said I must be, because I was the first girl in the class and sounded all my *h's;* and when the head-mistress came into the room I up and curtseyed, and asked her if we could have a holiday this afternoon on account of the beautiful sunshine. Then the head-mistress put on her eyeglasses, and her face grew black, and the sunshine seemed to go out of the room. And she said: "What! After all the holidays we have here, a month at New Year, and a fortnight at Passover, and all the Fast-days! I am surprised that you girls should be so lazy and idle, and ask for more. Why don't you take example by your teacher? Look at Miss Hyams!" We all looked at Miss Hyams, but she was looking for some papers in her desk. "Look how Miss Hyams works!" said the head-mistress. "*She* never grumbles, *she* never asks for a holiday!" We all looked again at Miss Hyams, but she hadn't yet found the papers. There was an awful silence; you could have heard a pin drop. There wasn't a single cough or rustle of a dress. Then the head-mistress turned to me, and she said: "And you, Esther Ansell, whom I always thought so highly of; I'm surprised at your being the ringleader in such a disgraceful request! You ought to

know better. I shall bear it in mind, Esther Ansell." With that she sailed out, stiff and straight as a poker, and the door closed behind her with a bang.'

'Well, and what did Miss Hyams say then?' asked Debby, deeply interested.

'She said: "Selina Green, and what did Moses do when the Children of Israel grumbled for water?" She just went on with the Scripture lesson as if nothing had happened.'

'I should tell the head-mistress who set me on,' cried Debby indignantly.

'Oh no,' said Esther, shaking her head. 'That would be mean. It's a matter for her own conscience. Oh, but I do wish,' she concluded, 'we had had a holiday! It would have been so lovely out in the Park.'

Victoria Park was 'the Park' to the Ghetto. A couple of miles off, far enough to make a visit to it an excursion, it was a perpetual blessing to the Ghetto. On rare Sunday afternoons, the Ansell family minus the *Bube* toiled there and back *en masse*, Moses carrying Isaac and Sarah by turns upon his shoulder. Esther loved the Park in all weathers, but best of all in the summer, when the great lake was bright and busy with boats, and the birds twittered in the leafy trees, and lobelias and calceolarias were woven into wonderful patterns by the gardeners,

Then she would throw herself down on the thick grass and look up in mystic rapture at the brooding blue sky, and forget to read the book she had brought with her, while the other children chased one another about in savage delight. Only once on a Saturday afternoon, when her father was not with them, did she get Dutch Debby to break through her retired habits and accompany them, and then it was not summer, but late autumn. There was an indefinable melancholy about the sere landscape. Russet refuse strewed the paths, and the gaunt trees waved fleshless arms in the breeze ; the November haze rose from the moist ground and dulled the blue of heaven with smoky clouds amid which the sun, a red sailless boat, floated at anchor among golden and crimson furrows and glimmering far-dotted fleeces. The small lake was slimy, reflecting the trees on its borders as a network of dirty branches. A solitary swan ruffled its plumes and elongated its throat, doubled in quivering outlines beneath the muddy surface. All at once the plash of oars was heard and the sluggish waters were stirred by the passage of a boat, in which a heroic young man was rowing a no less heroic young woman.

Dutch Debby burst into tears and went home. After that she fell back entirely on Bobby and Esther and the *London Journal*, and never even saved up nine shillings again.

CHAPTER X.

A SILENT FAMILY.

SUGARMAN the Shadchan arrived one evening a few days before Purim at the tiny two-storied house in which Esther's teacher lived, with little Nehemiah tucked under his arm. Nehemiah wore shoes and short red socks. The rest of his legs was bare; Sugarman always carried him so as to demonstrate this fact. Sugarman himself was rigged out in a handsome manner, and the day not being holy, his blue bandanna peeped out from his left coat-tail, instead of being tied round his trouser band.

'Good-morning, marm,' he said cheerfully.

'Good-morning, Sugarman,' said Mrs. Hyams.

She was a little careworn old woman of sixty, with white hair. Had she been more pious her hair would never have turned gray. But Miriam had long since put her veto on her mother's

black wig. Mrs. Hyams was a meek, weak person, and submitted in silence to the outrage on her deepest instincts. Old Hyams was stronger, but not strong enough. He, too, was a silent person.

'P'raps you're surprised,' said Sugarman, 'to get a call from me in my sealskin vestcoat. But de fact is, marm, I put it on to call on a lady. I only dropped in here on my vay.'

'Won't you take a chair?' said Mrs. Hyams. She spoke English painfully and slowly, having been schooled by Miriam.

'No, I'm not tired. But I vill put Nechemyah down on one, if you permit. Dere! sit still or I *potch* you! P'raps you could lend me your corkscrew.'

'With pleasure,' said Mrs. Hyams.

'I dank you. You see, my boy, Ebenezer, is *Bar-mitzvah* next Shabbos a veek, and I may not be passing again. You vill come?'

'I don't know,' said Mrs. Hyams hesitatingly. She was not certain whether Miriam considered Sugarman on their visiting-list.

'Don't say dat. I expect to open dirteen bottles of lemonade! You must come, you and Mr. Hyams and the whole family.'

'Thank you, I will tell Miriam, and Daniel, and my husband.'

'Dat's right.—Nechemyah, don't dance on de

good lady's chair.—Did you hear, Mrs. Hyams, of Mrs. Jonas's luck?'

'No.'

'I won her eleven pounds on the lotteree.'

'How nice!' said Mrs. Hyams, a little fluttered.

'I would let you have half a ticket for two pounds.'

'I haven't the money.'

'Vell, dirty-six shillings! Dere! I have to pay dat myself.'

'I would if I could, but I can't.'

'But you can have an eighth for nine shillings.'

Mrs. Hyams shook her head hopelessly.

'How is your son Daniel?' Sugarman asked.

'Pretty well, thank you. How is your wife?'

'Tank Gawd!'

'And your Bessie?'

'Tank Gawd! Is your Daniel in?'

'Yes.'

'Tank Gawd! I mean, can I see him?'

'It won't do any good.'

'No, not dat,' said Sugarman. 'I should like to ask him to de Confirmation myself.'

'Daniel!' called Mrs. Hyams.

He came from the back-yard in rolled-up shirt-sleeves, soap-suds drying on his arms. He was a pleasant-faced flaxen-haired young fellow, the junior of Miriam by eighteen months.

(There was will in the lower part of the face, and tenderness in the eyes.)

'Good-morning, sir,' said Sugarman. 'My Ebenezer is *Bar-mitzvah* next Shabbos week; vill you do me the honour to drop in vid your moder and fader after *Shool?*'

Daniel crimsoned suddenly. He had "No" on his lips, but suppressed it, and ultimately articulated it in some polite periphrasis. His mother noticed the crimson. On a blonde face it tells.

'Don't say dat,' said Sugarman. 'I expect to open dirteen bottles of lemonade. I have lent your good moder's corkscrew.'

'I shall be pleased to send Ebenezer a little present; but I can't come, I really can't. You must excuse me.' Daniel turned away.

'Vell,' said Sugarman, anxious to assure him he bore no malice; 'if you send a present I reckon it de same as if you come.'

'That's all right,' said Daniel, with strained heartiness.

Sugarman tucked Nehemiah under his arm, but lingered on the threshold. He did not know how to broach the subject. But the inspiration came.

'Do you know I have summonsed Morris Kerlinski?'

'No,' said Daniel. 'What for?'

'He owes me dirty shillings. I found him a very fine maiden, but now he is married he says it was only worth a suvran. He offered it me, but I vouldn't take it. A poor man he vas, too, and got ten pun from a Marriage Portion Society.'

'Is it worth while bringing a scandal on the community for the sake of ten shillings? It will be in all the papers, and shadchan will be spelt "shatcan," "shodkin," "shatkin," "chodcan," "shotgun," and goodness knows what else.'

'Yes, but it isn't ten shillings,' said Sugarman; 'it's dirty shillings.'

'But you say he offered you a sovereign?'

'So he did. He arranged for two-pun-ten. I took the suvran, but not in full payment.'

'You ought to settle it before the Beth-din,' said Daniel vehemently, 'or get some Jew to arbitrate. You make the Jews a laughing-stock. It is true all marriages depend on money,' he added bitterly; 'only it is the fashion of police court reporters to pretend the custom is limited to the Jews.'

'Vell, I did go to Reb Shemuel,' said Sugarman. 'I dought he'd be the very man to arbitrate.'

'Why?' asked Daniel.

'Vy? Hasn't he been a *Shadchan* himself? From who else shall we look for sympaty?'

'I see,' said Daniel, smiling a little; 'and apparently you got none.'

'No,' said Sugarman, growing wroth at the recollection. 'He said ve are not in Poland.'

'Quite true.'

'Yes, but I gave him an answer he didn't like,' said Sugarman. 'I said, "And ven ve are not in Poland, mustn't ve keep *none* of our religion?"' His tone changed from indignation to insinuation. 'Vy vill you not let me get *you* a vife, Mr. Hyams? I have several extra fine maidens in my eye. Come now, don't look so angry. How much commission vill you give me if I find you a maiden vid a hundred pound?'

'The maiden!' thundered Daniel. Then it dawned upon him that he had said a humorous thing, and he laughed. There was merriment as well as mysticism in Daniel's blue eye.

But Sugarman went away downhearted. Love is blind, and even marriage-brokers may be myopic. Most people not concerned knew that Daniel Hyams was 'sweet' on Sugarman's Bessie. And it was so. Daniel loved Bessie, and Bessie loved Daniel. Only Bessie did not speak because she was a woman, and Daniel did not speak because he was a man. They were a quiet family, the Hyamses. They all bore their crosses in a silence unbroken even at home. Miriam herself, the least reticent, did not give the im-

pression that she could not have husbands for the winking. Her demands were so high—that was all. Daniel was proud of her and her position and her cleverness, and was confident she would marry as well as she dressed. He did not expect her to contribute towards the expenses of the household, though she did, for he felt he had broad shoulders. He bore his mother and father on those shoulders—semi-invalids both. In the bold bad years of shameless poverty, Hyams had been a wandering metropolitan glazier; but this open degradation became intolerable as Miriam's prospects improved. It was partly for her sake that Daniel ultimately supported his parents in idleness, and refrained from speaking to Bessie. For he was only an employé in a fancy-goods warehouse, and on forty-five shillings a week you cannot keep up two respectable establishments.

—Bessie was a bonnie girl, and could not in the nature of things be long uncaught. There was a certain night on which Daniel did not sleep—hardly a white night, as our French neighbours say; a tear-stained night, rather. In the morning he was resolved to deny himself Bessie. Peace would be his, instead. If it did not come immediately, he knew it was on the way; for once before he had struggled and been so rewarded. That was in his eighteenth year, when he awoke to the glories of freethought, and knew himself a

victim to the Moloch of the Sabbath, to which fathers sacrifice their children. The proprietor of the fancy goods was a Jew, and, moreover, closed on Saturdays. But for this anachronism of keeping Saturday holy when you had Sunday also to laze on, Daniel felt a hundred higher careers would have been open to him. Later, when freethought waned (it was after Daniel had met Bessie), although he never returned to his father's narrowness, he found the abhorred Sabbath sanctifying his life. It made life a conscious voluntary sacrifice to an ideal, and the reward was a touch of consecration once a week. Daniel could not have described these things, nor did he speak of them, which was a pity. Once, and once only, in the ferment of freethought he had uncorked his soul, and it had run over with much froth, and thenceforward old Mendel Hyams and Beenah, his wife, opposed more furrowed foreheads to a world too strong for them. If Daniel had taken back his words, and told them he was happier for the ruin they had made of his prospects, their gait might not have been so listless. But he was a silent man.

'You will go to Sugarman's, mother,' he said now. 'You and father. Don't mind that I'm not going. I have another appointment for the afternoon.'

It was a superfluous lie for so silent a man.

'He doesn't like to be seen with us,' Beenah Hyams thought. But she was silent.

'He has never forgiven my putting him to the fancy goods,' thought Mendel Hyams when told. But he was silent.

It was of no good discussing it with his wife. These two had rather halved their joys than their sorrows. They had been married forty years, and had never had an intimate moment. Their marriage had been a matter of contract. Forty years ago, in Poland, Mendel Hyams had awoke one morning to find a face he had never seen before on the pillow beside his. Not even on the wedding-day had he been allowed a glimpse of his bride's countenance. That was the custom of the country and the time. Beenah bore her husband four children, of whom the elder two died ; but the marriage did not beget affection, often the inverse offspring of such unions. Beenah was a dutiful housewife, and Mendel Hyams supported her faithfully as long as his children would let him. Love never flew out of the window, for he was never in the house.

They did not talk to each other much. Beenah did the housework unaided by the sprig of a servant who was engaged to satisfy the neighbours. In his enforced idleness Mendel fell back on his religion, almost a profession in itself. They were a silent couple.

At sixty there is not much chance of a forty-year-old silence being broken on this side of the grave. So far as his personal happiness was concerned, Mendel had only one hope left in the world—to die in Jerusalem. His feeling for Jerusalem was unique. All the hunted Jew in him combined with all the battered man to transfigure Zion with the splendour of sacred dreams, and girdle it with the rainbows that are builded of bitter tears. And with it all a dread that, if he were buried elsewhere, when the last trump sounded he would have to roll under the earth and under the sea to Jerusalem, the rendezvous of Resurrection.

Every year at the Passover table he gave his hope voice: 'Next year—in Jerusalem!' In her deepest soul Miriam echoed this wish of his. She felt she could like him better at a distance. Beenah Hyams had only one hope left in the world—to die.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PURIM BALL.

SAM LEVINE duly returned for the Purim ball. Malka was away, and so it was safe to arrive on the Sabbath. Sam and Leah called for Hannah in a cab, for the pavements were unfavourable to dancing-shoes, and the three drove to the Club, which was not a sixth of a mile off.

The Club was the People's Palace of the Ghetto; but that it did not reach the bed-rock of the inhabitants was sufficiently evident from the fact that its language was English. The very lowest stratum was of secondary formation —the children of immigrants—while the highest touched the lower middle class on the mere fringes of the Ghetto. It was a happy place, where young men and maidens met on equal terms and similar subscriptions; where billiards and flirtations and concerts and laughter and gay gossip were always on, and lemonade and cakes never off; a heaven where marriages were

made, books borrowed, and newspapers read. Muscular Judaism was well to the fore at the Club, and entertainments were frequent. The middle classes of the community, overflowing with artistic instinct, supplied a phenomenal number of reciters, vocalists, and instrumentalists ready to oblige, and the greatest favourites of the London footlights were pleased to come down, partly because they found such keenly appreciative audiences, and partly because they were so much mixed up with the race, both professionally and socially. There were serious lectures now and again, but few of the members took them seriously; they came to the Club not to improve their minds, but to relax them.

The Club was a blessing without disguise to the daughters of Judah, and certainly kept their brothers from harm. The ballroom, with its decorations of evergreens and winter blossoms, was a gay sight. Most of the dancers were in evening dress, and it would have been impossible to tell the ball from a Belgravian gathering, except by the preponderance of youth and beauty. Where could you match such a bevy of brunettes, where find such blondes? They were anything but lymphatic, these Oriental blondes, if their eyes did not sparkle so intoxicatingly as those of the darker majority. The young men had carefully-curled moustaches

and ringlets oiled like the Assyrian bull, and figure-six noses, and studs glittering on their creamy shirt-fronts. How they did it on their wages was one of the many miracles of Jewish history. For socially, and even in most cases financially, they were only on the level of the Christian artisan. These young men in dress-coats were. epitomes of one aspect of Jewish history. Not in every respect improvements on the Sons of the Covenant, though; replacing the primitive manners and the piety of the foreign Jew by a veneer of cheap culture and a laxity of ceremonial observance.

It was a merry party, almost like a family gathering, not merely because most of the dancers knew one another, but because 'all Israel are brothers' — and sisters. They danced very buoyantly, not boisterously, the square dances symmetrically executed, every performer knowing his part, the waltzing full of rhythmic grace. When the music was popular, they accompanied it on their voices. After supper their heels grew lighter, and the laughter and gossip louder, but never beyond the bounds of decorum. A few Dutch dancers tried to introduce the more gymnastic methods in vogue in their own clubs, where the kangaroo is dancing-master, but the sentiment of the floor was against them. Hannah danced little, a voluntary wall-flower; for she

looked radiant in tussore silk, and there was an air of refinement about the slight, pretty girl that attracted the beaux of the Club. But she only gave a duty dance to Sam and a waltz to Daniel Hyams, who had been brought by his sister, though he did not boast a swallow-tail to match her flowing draperies. Hannah caught a rather unamiable glance from pretty Bessie Sugarman, whom poor Daniel was trying hard not to see in the crush.

'Is your sister engaged yet?' Hannah asked, for want of something to say.

'You would know it if she was,' said Daniel, looking so troubled that Hannah reproached herself for the meaningless remark.

'How well she dances!' she made haste to say.

'Not better than you,' said Daniel gallantly.

'I see compliments are among the fancy goods you deal in. Do you reverse?' she added, as they came to an awkward corner.

'Yes—but not my compliments,' he said, smiling. 'Miriam taught me.'

'She makes me think of Miriam dancing by the Red Sea,' she said, laughing at the incongruous idea.

'She played a timbrel, though, didn't she?' he asked. 'I confess I don't quite know what a timbrel is.'

'A sort of tambourine, I suppose,' said Hannah merrily; 'and she sang because the children of Israel were saved.'

They both laughed heartily, but when the waltz was over they returned to their individual gloom. Towards supper-time, in the middle of a square dance, Sam, suddenly noticing Hannah's solitude, brought her a tall, bronzed, gentlemanly young man in a frock-coat, mumbled an introduction, and rushed back to the arms of the exacting Leah.

'Excuse me, I am not dancing to-night,' Hannah said coldly, in reply to the stranger's demand for her programme.

'Well, I'm not half sorry,' he said, with a frank smile. 'I had to ask you, you know. But I should feel quite out of place bumping such a lot of swells.'

There was something unusual about the words and the manner which impressed Hannah agreeably, in spite of herself. Her face relaxed a little as she said: 'Why, haven't you been to one of these affairs before?'

'Oh yes, six or seven years ago; but the place seems quite altered. They've rebuilt it, haven't they? Very few of us sported dress-coats here in the days before I went to the Cape. I only came back the other day, and somebody gave me a ticket, and so I've looked in for auld lang syne.'

An unsympathetic hearer would have detected a note of condescension in the last sentence. Hannah detected it, for the announcement that the young man had returned from the Cape froze all her nascent sympathy. She was turned to ice again. Hannah knew him well—the young man from the Cape. He was a higher and more disagreeable development of the young man in the dress-coat. He had put South African money in his purse—whether honestly or not, no one inquired: the fact remained, he had put it in his purse. Sometimes the law confiscated it, pretending he had purchased diamonds illegally or whatnot, but then the young man did *not* return from the Cape. But, to do him justice, the secret of his success was less dishonesty than the opportunities for initiative energy in unexploited districts. Besides, not having to keep up appearances, he descended to menial occupations, and toiled so long and terribly that he would probably have made just as much money at home, if he had had the courage. Be this as it may, there the money was; and, armed with it, the young man set sail literally for England, home and beauty, resuming his cast-off gentility with several extra layers of superciliousness.

Pretty Jewesses, pranked in their prettiest clothes, hastened, metaphorically speaking, to the port to welcome the wanderer, for they knew

it was from among them he would make his pick. There were several varieties of him—marked by financial ciphers—but whether he married in his old station or higher up the scale, he was always faithful to the sectarian tradition of the race, and this less from religious motives than from hereditary instinct. Like the young man in the dress-coat, he held the Christian girl to be cold of heart and unsprightly of temperament. He laid it down that all Yiddishë girls possessed that warmth and *chic* which, among Christians, were the birthright of a few actresses and music-hall artistes—themselves, probably, Jewesses! And on things theatrical this young man spoke as one having authority. Perhaps, though he was scarce conscious of it, at the bottom of his repulsion was the certainty that the Christian girl could not fry fish. She might be delightful for flirtation of all degrees, but had not been formed to make him permanently happy.

Such was the conception which Hannah had formed for herself of the young man from the Cape. This latest specimen of the genus was prepossessing, into the bargain. There was no denying he was well-built, with a shapely head and a lovely moustache. Good looks alone were vouchers for insolence and conceit, but, backed by the aforesaid purse—— She turned

her head away, and stared at the evolutions of the Lancers with much interest.

'They've got some pretty girls in that set,' he observed admiringly.

Evidently the young man did not intend to go away.

Hannah felt very annoyed. 'Yes,' she said sharply; 'which would you like?'

'I shouldn't care to make invidious distinctions,' he replied with a little laugh.

'Odious prig!' thought Hannah. 'He actually doesn't see I'm sitting on him!' Aloud she said: 'No? But you can't marry them all.'

'Why should I marry any?' he asked in the same light tone, though there was a shade of surprise in it.

'Haven't you come back to England to get a wife? Most young men do, when they don't have one exported to them in Africa.'

He laughed with genuine enjoyment, and strove to catch the answering gleam in her eyes, but she kept them averted. They were standing with their backs to the wall, and he could only see the profile and note the graceful poise of the head upon the warm-coloured neck that stood out against the white bodice. The frank ring of his laughter mixed with the merry jingle of the fifth figure.

'Well, I'm afraid I'm going to be an exception,' he said.

'You think nobody good enough, perhaps,' she could not help saying.

'Oh! Why should you think that?'

'Perhaps you're married already.'

'Oh no, I'm not,' he said earnestly. 'You're not, either, are you?'

'Me?' she asked. Then, with a barely perceptible pause, she said: 'Of course I am.'

The thought of posing as the married woman she theoretically was flashed upon her suddenly, and appealed irresistibly to her sense of fun. The recollection that the nature of the ring on her finger was concealed by her glove afforded her supplementary amusement.

'Oh!' was all he said. 'I didn't catch your name exactly.'

'I didn't catch yours,' she replied evasively.

'David Brandon,' he said readily.

'It's a pretty name,' she said, turning smilingly to him; the infinite possibilities of making fun of him latent in the joke quite warmed her towards him. 'How unfortunate for me I have destroyed my chance of getting it!'

It was the first time she had smiled, and he liked the play of light round the curves of her mouth, amid the shadows of the soft dark skin, in the black depths of the eyes.

'How unfortunate for me!' he said, smiling in return.

'Oh yes, of course,' she said, with a little toss of her head. 'There is no danger in saying that now.'

'I wouldn't care if there was.'

'It is easy to smooth down the serpent when the fangs are drawn,' she laughed back.

'What an extraordinary comparison!' he exclaimed. 'But where are all the people going? It isn't all over, I hope.'

'Why, what do you want to stay for? You're not dancing.'

'That is the reason — unless I dance with you.'

'And then you would want to go?' she flashed with mock resentment.

'I see you're too sharp for me,' he said lugubriously. 'Roughing it among the Boers makes a fellow a bit dull in compliments.'

'Dull indeed!' said Hannah, drawing herself up with great seriousness. 'I think you're far more complimentary than you have a right to be to a married woman.'

His face fell. 'Oh, I didn't mean anything,' he said apologetically.

'So I thought,' retorted Hannah.

The poor fellow grew more red and confused than ever. Hannah felt quite sympathetic with

him now, so pleased was she at the humiliated condition to which she had brought the young man from the Cape.

'Well, I'll say good-bye,' he said awkwardly. 'I suppose I mustn't ask to take you down to supper. I dare say your husband will want that privilege.'

'I dare say,' replied Hannah, smiling, 'although husbands do not always appreciate their privileges.'

'I shall be glad if yours doesn't!' he burst forth.

'Thank you for your good wishes for my domestic happiness,' she said severely.

'Oh, why will you misconstrue everything I say?' he pleaded. 'You must think me an awful *Schlemihl*, putting my foot into it so often. Anyhow, I hope I shall meet you again somewhere.'

'The world is very small,' she reminded him.

'I wish I knew your husband,' he said ruefully.

'Why?' said Hannah innocently.

'Because I could call on him,' he replied, smiling.

'Well, you do know him,' she could not help saying.

'Do I? Who is it? I don't think I do!' he exclaimed.

'Well, considering he introduced you to me!'

'Sam!' cried David, startled.

'Yes.'

'But——' said David, half incredulously, half in surprise. He certainly had never credited Sam with the wisdom to select, or the merit to deserve a wife like this.

'But what?' asked Hannah, with charming naïveté.

'He said—I—I—at least I think he said—I—I understood that he introduced me to Miss Solomon as his intended wife.'

Solomon was the name of Malka's first husband, and so of Leah.

'Quite right,' said Hannah simply.

'Then—what—how?' he stammered.

'She *was* his intended wife,' explained Hannah, as if she were telling the most natural thing in the world; 'before he married me, you know.'

'I—I beg your pardon if I seemed to doubt you. I really thought you were joking.'

'Why, what made you think so?'

'Well,' he blurted out, 'he didn't mention he was married, and seeing him dancing with her the whole time——'

'I suppose he thinks he owes her some attention,' said Hannah indifferently; 'by way of compensation, probably. I shouldn't be at all

surprised if he takes her down to supper instead of me.'

'There he is, struggling towards the buffet. Yes, he has her on his arm.'

'You speak as if she were his phylacteries,' said Hannah, smiling. 'It would be a pity to disturb them. So, if you like, *you* can have me on your arm, as you put it.'

The young man's face lit up with pleasure, the keener that it was unexpected.

'I am very glad to have such phylacteries on my arm, as you put it,' he responded. 'I fancy I should be a good deal *froomer* if my phylacteries were like that.'

'What! aren't you *froom?*' she said, as they joined the hungry procession, in which she noted Bessie Sugarman on the arm of Daniel Hyams.

'No, I'm a regular wrong un,' he replied. 'As for phylacteries, I almost forget how to lay them.'

'That *is* bad,' she admitted, though he could not ascertain her own point of view from the tone.

'Well, everybody else is just as bad,' he said cheerfully. 'All the old piety seems to be breaking down. It's Purim, but how many of us have been to hear the—the what do you call it? —the *Megillah* read? There is actually a minister here to-night bare-headed. And how

many of us are going to wash our hands before supper, or *bensh* afterwards, I should like to know? Why, it's as much as can be expected if the food's *kosher* and there's no ham sandwiches on the dishes. Lord! how my old dad—God rest his soul!—would have been horrified by such a party as this!'

'Yes, it's wonderful how ashamed Jews are of their religion outside a synagogue!' said Hannah musingly. '*My* father, if he were here, would put on his hat after supper, and *bensh*, though there wasn't another man in the room to follow his example.'

'And I should admire him for it,' said David earnestly, though I admit I shouldn't follow his example myself. I suppose he's one of the old school.'

'He is Reb Shemuel,' said Hannah with dignity.

'Oh, indeed!' he exclaimed, not without surprise; 'I know him well. He used to bless me when I was a boy, and it used to cost him a halfpenny a time. Such a jolly fellow!'

'I'm so glad you think so,' said Hannah, flushing with pleasure.

'Of course I do. Does he still have all those *Greeners* coming to propound cases?'

'Oh yes. Their piety is just the same as ever.'

'They're poor,' observed David. 'It's always those poorest in worldly goods who are richest in religion.'

'Well, isn't that a compensation?' returned Hannah with a little sigh. 'But from my father's point of view, the truth is rather that those who have most pecuniary difficulties have most religious difficulties.'

'Ah, I suppose they come to your father as much to solve the first as the second.'

'Father is very good,' she said simply.

They had by this time obtained something to eat, and for a minute or so the dialogue became merely dietary.

'Do you know?' he said in the course of the meal, 'I feel I ought not to have told you what a wicked person I am. I put my foot into it there, too.'

'No, why?'

'Because you are Reb Shemuel's daughter.'

'Oh, what nonsense! I like to hear people speak their mind. Besides, you mustn't fancy I'm as *froom* as my father!'

'I don't fancy that. Not quite,' he laughed. 'I know there's some blessed old law or other by which women haven't got the same chance of distinguishing themselves that way as men. I have a vague recollection of saying a prayer, thanking God for not having made me a woman.'

'Ah, that must have been a long time ago,' she said slyly.

'Yes, when I was a boy,' he admitted. Then the oddity of the premature thanksgiving struck them both, and they laughed.

'You've got a different form provided for you, haven't you?" he said.

'Yes, I have to thank God for having made me according to His will.'

'You don't seem satisfied, for all that,' he said, struck by something in the way she said it.

'How can a woman be satisfied?' she asked, looking up frankly. 'She has no voice in her destinies. She must shut her eyes and open her mouth, and swallow what it pleases God to send her.'

'All right, shut your eyes,' he said, and, putting his hand over them, he gave her a tit-bit and restored the conversation to a more flippant level.

'You mustn't do that,' she said. 'Suppose my husband were to see you?'

'Oh, bother!' he exclaimed. 'I don't know why it is, but I don't seem to realize you're a married woman.'

'Am I playing the part so badly as all that?'

'Is it a part?' he cried eagerly.

She shook her head. His face fell again. She could hardly fail to note the change.

'No, it's a stern reality,' she said. 'I wish it wasn't.'

It seemed a bold confession, but it was easy to understand. Sam had been an old schoolfellow of his, and David had not thought highly of him. He was silent a moment.

'Are you not happy?' he said gently.

'Not in my marriage.'

'Sam must be a regular brute!' he cried indignantly. 'He doesn't know how to treat you. He ought to have his head punched, the way he's going on with that fat thing in red.'

'Oh, don't run her down,' said Hannah, struggling to repress her emotions, which were not purely of laughter. 'She's my dearest friend.'

'They always are,' said David oracularly. 'But how came you to marry him?'

'Accident,' she said indifferently.

'Accident!' he repeated, open-eyed.

'Ah, well, it doesn't matter,' said Hannah, meditatively conveying a spoonful of trifle to her mouth. 'I shall be divorced from him to-morrow. Be careful! You nearly broke that plate.'

David stared at her open-mouthed.

'Going to be divorced from him to-morrow!'

'Yes. Is there anything odd about it?'

'Oh,' he said, after staring at her impassive

face for a full minute. 'Now I'm sure you've been making fun of me all along.'

'My dear Mr. Brandon, why will you persist in making me out a liar?'

He was forced to apologize again, and became such a model of perplexity and embarrassment that Hannah's gravity broke down at last, and her merry peal of laughter mingled with the clatter of plates and the hubbub of voices.

'I must take pity on you and enlighten you,' she said; 'but promise me it shall go no further. It's only our own little circle that knows about it, and I don't want to be the laughing-stock of the Lane.'

'Of course I will promise,' he said eagerly.

She kept his curiosity on the *qui vive* to amuse herself a little longer, but ended by telling him all, amid frequent exclamations of surprise.

'Well, I never!' he said when it was over. 'Fancy a religion in which only two per cent. of the people who profess it have ever heard of its laws. I suppose we're so mixed up with the English that it never occurs to us we've got marriage laws of our own—like the Scotch. Anyhow, I'm real glad, and I congratulate you.'

'On what?'

'On not being really married to Sam.'

'Well, you're a nice friend of his, I must

say. I don't congratulate myself, I can tell you.'

'You don't?' he said in a disappointed tone.

She shook her head silently.

'Why not?' he inquired anxiously.

'Well, to tell the truth, this forced marriage was my only chance of getting a husband who wasn't pious. Don't look so puzzled. I wasn't shocked at your wickedness—you mustn't be at mine. You know there's such a lot of religion in our house that I thought if I ever did get married, I'd like a change.'

'Ha! ha! ha! So you're as the rest of us. Well, it's plucky of you to admit it.'

'Don't see it. My living doesn't depend on religion, thank Heaven! Father's a saint, I know, but he swallows everything he sees in his books, just as he swallows everything mother and I put before him in his plate, and in spite of it all——'

She was about to mention Levi's shortcomings, but checked herself in time. She had no right to unveil anybody's soul but her own, and she didn't know why she was doing that.

'But you don't mean to say your father would forbid you to marry a man you cared for, just because he wasn't *froom*.'

'I'm sure he would.'

'But that would be cruel.'

'He wouldn't think so. He'd think he was saving my soul, and you must remember he can't imagine anyone who has been taught to see its beauty not loving the yoke of the Law. He's the best father in the world, but, when religion's concerned, the best-hearted of mankind are liable to become hard as stone. You don't know my father as I do. But, apart from that, I wouldn't marry a man myself who might hurt my father's position. I should have to keep a *kosher* house, or look how people would talk!'

'And wouldn't you if you had your own way?'

'I don't know what I would do. It's so impossible, the idea of my having my own way. I think I should probably go in for a change. I'm so tired, so tired of this eternal ceremony, always washing up plates and dishes. I dare say it's all for our good, but I *am* so tired.'

'Oh, I don't see much difficulty about *Koshers*. I always eat *kosher* meat myself when I can get it, providing it's not so beastly tough, as it has a knack of being. Of course, it's absurd to expect a man to go without meat when he's travelling up-country just because it hasn't been killed with a knife instead of a pole-axe. Besides, don't we know well enough that the folks who are most particular about those sort of things don't mind swindling and setting their

houses on fire, and all manner of abominations? I wouldn't be a Christian for the world, but I should like to see a little more common-sense introduced into our religion; it ought to be more up to date. If ever I marry, I should like my wife to be a girl who wouldn't want to keep anything but the higher parts of Judaism. Not out of laziness, mind you, but out of conviction.'

David stopped suddenly, surprised at his own sentiments, which he learnt for the first time. However vaguely they might have been simmering in his brain, he could not honestly accuse himself of having ever bestowed any reflection on 'the higher parts of Judaism.' or even on the religious convictions, apart from the racial aspects, of his future wife. Could it be that Hannah's earnestness was infecting him?

'Oh, then you *would* marry a Jewess?' said Hannah.

'Oh, of course!' he said, in astonishment. Then, as he looked at her pretty, earnest face, the amusing recollection that she *was* married already came over him with a sort of shock, not wholly comical. There was a minute of silence, each pursuing a separate train of thought. Then David wound up, as if there had been no break, with an elliptical, 'Wouldn't you?'

Hannah shrugged her shoulders and elevated

her eyebrows in a gesture that lacked her usual grace.

'Not if I had only to please myself,' she added.

'Oh, come, don't say that!' he said anxiously. 'I don't believe mixed marriages are a success. Really I don't. Besides, look at the scandal!'

Again she shrugged her shoulders, defiantly this time.

'I don't suppose I shall ever get married,' she said. 'I never could marry a man father would approve of, so that a Christian would be no worse than an educated Jew.'

David did not quite grasp the sentence; he was trying to, when Sam and Leah passed them. Sam winked in a friendly, if not very refined, manner.

'I see you two are getting on all right,' he said.

'Good gracious!' cried Hannah, starting up, with a blush. 'Everybody's going back. They *will* think us greedy! What a pair of fools we are to have got into such serious conversation at a ball!'

'Was it serious?' said David, with a retrospective air. 'Well, I never enjoyed a conversation so much in my life.'

'You mean the supper,' Hannah said lightly.

'Well, both. It's your fault that we don't behave more appropriately.'

'How do you mean?'

'You won't dance.'

'Do you want to?'

'Rather!'

'I thought you were afraid of all the swells.'

'Supper has given me courage.'

'Oh, very well, if you want to—that's to say, if you really can waltz.'

'Try me; only you must allow for my being out of practice. I didn't get many dances at the Cape, I can tell you.'

'The Cape!' Hannah heard the words without making her usual grimace. She put her hand lightly on his shoulder, he encircled her waist with his arm, and they surrendered themselves to the intoxication of the slow voluptuous music.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SONS OF THE COVENANT.

THE Sons of the Covenant sent no representatives to the Club ball, wotting neither of waltzes nor of dress-coats, and preferring death to the embrace of a strange dancing woman. They were the congregation of which Mr. Belcovitch was president, and their synagogue was the ground-floor of No. 1, Royal Street—two large rooms knocked into one, and the rear partitioned off for the use of the bewigged, heavy-jawed women who might not sit with the men lest they should fascinate their thoughts away from things spiritual. Its furniture was bare benches, a raised platform with a reading-desk in the centre, and a wooden curtained ark at the end containing two parchment scrolls of the Law, each with a silver pointer and silver bells and pomegranates. The scrolls were in manuscript, for the printing-press has never yet sullied the sanctity of the synagogue editions of the Penta-

teuch. The room was badly ventilated, and what little air there was was generally sucked up by a greedy company of wax-candles, big and little, stuck in brass holders. The back-window gave on the yard and the contiguous cow-sheds, and 'moos' mingled with the impassioned supplications of the worshippers, who came hither two, and often three, times a day to batter the gates of heaven and to listen to sermons more exegetical than ethical. They dropped in, mostly in their workaday garments and grime, and rumbled and roared and chorused prayers with a zeal that shook the window-panes, and there was never lack of *Minyan*—the congregational quorum of ten. In the West End synagogues are built to eke out the incomes of poor *Minyan*-men or professional congregants; in the East End rooms are tricked up for prayer. This synagogue was all of luxury many of its Sons could boast. It was their salon and their lecture-hall. It supplied them not only with their religion, but their art and letters, their politics and their public amusements. It was their home as well as the Almighty's, and on occasions they were familiar, and even a little vulgar, with Him. It was a place in which they could sit in their slippers—metaphorically, that is; for though they frequently did so literally, it was by way of reverence, not ease. They enjoyed themselves

in this *Shool* of theirs; they shouted and skipped and shook and sang, they wailed and moaned, they clenched their fists and thumped their breasts, and they were not least happy when they were crying. There is an apocryphal anecdote of one of them being in the act of taking a pinch of snuff, when the Confession caught him unexpectedly.

'We have trespassed,' he wailed mechanically, as he spasmodically put the snuff in his bosom and beat his nose with his clenched fist.

They prayed metaphysics, acrostics, angelology, Cabalah, history, exegetics, Talmudical controversies, menus, recipes, priestly prescriptions, the canonical books, psalms, love-poems, an undigested hotch-potch of exalted and questionable sentiments, of communal and egoistic aspirations of the highest order. It was a wonderful liturgy, as grotesque as it was beautiful; like an old cathedral, in all styles of architecture, stored with shabby antiquities and side-shows, and overgrown with moss and lichen—a heterogeneous blend of historical strata of all periods, in which gems of poetry and pathos and spiritual fervour glittered, and pitiful records of ancient persecution lay petrified. And the method of praying these things was equally complex and uncouth, equally the bond-slave of tradition; here a rising and there a bow, now three steps

backwards and now a beating of the breast, this bit for the congregation and that for the minister; variants of a page, a word, a syllable, even a vowel, ready for every possible contingency. Their religious consciousness was largely a musical box: the thrill of the ram's horn, the cadenza of a psalmic phrase, the jubilance of a festival 'Amen' and the sobriety of a workaday 'Amen,' the Passover melodies and the Pentecost, the minor keys of Atonement and the hilarious rhapsodies of Rejoicing, the plain chant of the Law and the more ornate intonation of the Prophets—all this was known and loved, and was far more important than the meaning of it all, or its relation to their real lives; for page upon page was gabbled off at rates that could not be excelled by automata. But if they did not always know what they were saying, they always meant it. If the service had been more intelligible it would have been less emotional and edifying. There was not a sentiment, however incomprehensible, for which they were not ready to die or to damn.

'All Israel are brethren;' and indeed there was a strange, antique clannishness about these Sons of the Covenant, which, in the modern world, where the ends of the ages meet, is Socialism. They prayed for one another while alive, visited one another's bedsides when sick,

buried one another when dead. No mercenary hands poured the yolks of eggs over their dead faces, and arrayed their corpses in their praying-shawls. No hired masses were said for the sick or the troubled, for the psalm-singing services of the Sons of the Covenant were always available for petitioning the heavens, even though their brother had been arrested for buying stolen goods, and the appeal might be an invitation to Providence to compound a felony. Little charities of their own they had, too—a Sabbath Meal Society, and a Marriage Portion Society, to buy the sticks for poor couples; and when a pauper countryman arrived from Poland, one of them boarded him, and another lodged him, and a third taught him a trade. Strange exotics in a land of prose, carrying with them through the paven highways of London the odour of Continental Ghettos, and bearing in their eyes, through all the shrewdness of their glances, the eternal mysticism of the Orient, where God was born. Hawkers and pedlars, tailors and cigar-makers, cobblers and furriers, glaziers and cap-makers—this was in sum their life: to pray much and to work long; to beg a little and to cheat a little; to eat not over-much and to 'drink' scarce at all; to beget annual children by chaste wives (disallowed them half the year), and to rear them not overwell; to study the Law and the Prophets, and to

reverence the Rabbinical tradition and the chaos of commentaries expounding it; to abase themselves before the 'Life of Man' and Joseph Caro's 'Prepared Table' as though the authors had presided at the foundation of the earth; to wear phylacteries and fringes, to keep the beard unshaven and the corners of the hair uncut; to know no work on Sabbath and no rest on week-day. It was a series of recurrent landmarks, ritual and historical, of intimacy with God so continuous that they were in danger of forgetting His existence, as of the air they breathed. They ate unleavened bread in Passover, and blessed the moon, and counted the days of the Omer till Pentecost saw the synagogue dressed with flowers in celebration of an Asiatic fruit harvest by a European people divorced from agriculture; they passed to the terrors and triumphs of the New Year (with its domestic symbolism of apple and honey and its procession to the river), and the revelry of repentance on the Great White Fast, when they burned long candles and whirled fowls round their heads and attired themselves in grave-clothes, and saw from their seats in synagogue the long Fast-day darken slowly into dusk, while God was sealing the decrees of Life and Death; they passed to Tabernacles, when they ran up rough booths in backyards, draped with their bed-sheets and

covered with greenery, and bore through the streets citrons in boxes and a waving combination of myrtle and palm and willow branches, wherewith they made a pleasant rustling in the synagogue; and thence to the Rejoicing of the Law, when they danced and drank rum in the House of the Lord, and scrambled sweets for the little ones, and made a sevenfold circuit with the two scrolls, supplemented by toy flags and children's candles stuck in hollow carrots; and then on again to Dedication, with its celebration of the Maccabæan deliverance and the miracle of the unwaning oil in the Temple, and to Purim, with its masquerading and its execration of Haman's name by the banging of little hammers; and so back to Passover. And with these larger cycles, epicycles of minor fasts and feasts, multiplex, not to be overlooked, from the fast of the ninth of Ab—fatal day for the race—when they sat on the ground in shrouds, and wailed for the destruction of Jerusalem, to the feast of the Great Hosannah, when they whipped away willow-leaves on the *Shool* benches in symbolism of forgiven sins, sitting up the whole of the night before in a long paroxysm of prayer, mitigated by coffee and cakes; from the period in which nuts were prohibited to the period in which marriages were commended.

And each day, too, had its cycles of religious

duty, its comprehensive and cumbrous ritual, with accretions of commentary and tradition.

And every contingency of the individual life was equally provided for, and the writings that regulated all this complex ritual are a marvellous monument of the patience, piety, and juristic genius of the race—and of the persecution which threw it back upon its sole treasure, the Law.

Thus they lived and died, these Sons of the Covenant, half-automata, sternly disciplined by voluntary and involuntary privation, hemmed and mewed in by iron walls of form and poverty, joyfully ground under the perpetual rotary wheel of ritualism, good-humoured withal, and casuistic, like all people whose religion stands much upon ceremony; inasmuch as a ritual law comes to count one equally with a moral, and a man is not half bad who does three-fourths of his duty.

And so the stuffy room, with its guttering candles and its chameleon-coloured ark-curtain, was the pivot of their narrow lives. Joy came to bear to it the offering of its thanksgiving and to vow sixpenny-bits to the Lord, prosperity came in a high hat to chaffer for the holy privileges, and grief came with rent garments to lament the beloved dead and glorify the name of the Eternal.

The poorest life is to itself the universe and

all that therein is, and these humble products of a great and terrible past, strange fruits of a motley-flowering secular tree, whose roots are in Canaan, and whose boughs overshadow the earth, were all the happier for not knowing that the fulness of life was not theirs.

And the years went rolling on, and the children grew up, and here and there a parent.

* * * * *

The Elders of the synagogue were met in council.

'He is greater than a prince,' said the Shalotten Shammos.

'If all the princes of the earth were put in one scale,' said Mr. Belcovitch, 'and our Maggid, Moses, in the other, he would outweigh them all. He is worth a hundred of the Chief Rabbi of England, who has been seen bareheaded.'

'From Moses to Moses there has been none like Moses,' said old Mendel Hyams, interrupting the Yiddish with a Hebrew quotation.

'Oh no,' said the Shalotten Shammos, who was a great stickler for precision, being, as his nickname implied, a master of ceremonies. 'I can't admit that. Look at my brother Nachmann.'

There was a general laugh at the Shalotten Shammos's bull, the proverb dealing only with Moseses.

'He has the true gift,' observed Froom Karl-

kammer, shaking the flames of his hair pensively. 'For the letters of his name have the same numerical value as those of the great Moses da Leon.'

Froom Karlkammer was listened to with respect, for he was an honorary member of the committee, who paid for two seats in a larger congregation, and only worshipped with the Sons of the Covenant on special occasions. The Shalotten Shammos, however, was of contradictory temperament; a born dissentient, upheld by a steady consciousness of highly superior English, the drop of bitter in Belcovitch's presidential cup. He was a long, thin man, who towered above the congregation, and was as tall as the bulk of them even when he was bowing his acknowledgments to his Maker.

'How do you make that out?' he asked Karlkammer. 'Moses, of course, adds up the same as Moses; but while the other part of the Maggid's name makes seventy-three, Da Leon's makes ninety-one.'

'Ah, that's because you're ignorant of Gematriyah,' said little Karlkammer, looking up contemptuously at the cantankerous giant. 'You reckon all the letters on the same system, and you omit to give yourself the license of deleting the ciphers.'

In philology it is well known that all con-

sonants are interchangeable, and vowels don't count; in Gematriyah any letter may count for anything, and the total may be summed up anyhow.

Karlkammer was one of the curiosities of the Ghetto. In a land of *froom* men, he was the *froomest*. He had the very genius of fanaticism. On the Sabbath he spoke nothing but Hebrew, whatever the inconvenience and however numerous the misunderstandings, and if he perchance paid a visit he would not perform the 'work' of lifting the knocker. Of course he had his handkerchief girt round his waist to save him from carrying it; but this compromise, being general, was not characteristic of Karlkammer, any more than his habit of wearing two gigantic sets of phylacteries where average piety was content with one of moderate size. One of the walls of his room had an unpapered and unpainted scrap in mourning for the fall of Jerusalem. He walked through the streets to synagogue attired in his praying-shawl and phylacteries, and knocked three times at the door of God's house when he arrived. On the Day of Atonement he walked in his socks, though the heavens fell, wearing his grave-clothes. On this day he remained standing in synagogue from six a.m. to seven p.m., with his body bent at an angle of ninety degrees. It was to give

him bending space that he hired two seats. On Tabernacles, not having any ground whereon to erect a booth, by reason of living in an attic, he knocked a square hole in the ceiling, covered it with branches, through which the free air of heaven played, and hung a quadrangle of sheets from roof to floor. He bore to synagogue the tallest *Lulav* of palm-branches that could be procured, and quarrelled with a rival pietist for the last place in the floral procession, as being the lowliest and meekest man in Israel, an ethical pedestal equally claimed by his rival. He insisted on bearing a corner of the biers of all the righteous dead. Almost every other day was a fast-day for Karlkammer, and he had a host of supplementary ceremonial observances which are not for the vulgar. Compared to him, Moses Ansell and the ordinary Sons of the Covenant were mere heathens. He was a man of prodigious distorted mental activity. He had read omnivorously amid the vast stores of Hebrew literature, was a great authority on Cabalah, understood astronomy, and still more astrology, was strong on finance, and could argue coherently on any subject outside religion. His letters to the press on specifically Jewish subjects were the most hopeless, involved, incomprehensible, and protracted puzzles ever penned, bristling with Hebrew quotations from the most

varying, the most irrelevant, and the most mutually incongruous sources, and peppered with the dates of birth and death of every Rabbi mentioned.

No one had ever been known to follow one of these argumentations to the bitter end. They were written in good English, modified by a few peculiar terms used in senses unsuspected by dictionary-makers; in a beautiful hand, with the *t's* uncrossed, but crowned with the side-stroke, so as to avoid the appearance of the symbol of Christianity, and with the dates expressed according to the Hebrew calendar, for Karlkammer refused to recognise the chronology of the Christian. He made three copies of every letter, and each was exactly like the others in every word and every line. His bill for midnight oil must have been extraordinary, for he was a business man, and had to earn his living by day. Kept within the limits of sanity by a religion without apocalyptic visions, he was saved from predicting the end of the world by mystic calculations; but he used them to prove everything else, and fervently believed that endless meanings were deducible from the numerical value of Biblical words; that not a curl at the tail of a letter of any word in any sentence but had its super-subtle significance. The elaborate cipher, with which Bacon is

alleged to have written Shakespeare's plays, were mere child's play compared with the infinite revelations which, in Karlkammer's belief, the Deity left latent in writing the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi, and in inspiring the Talmud and the holier treasures of Hebrew literature. Nor were these ideas of his own origination. His was an eclectic philosophy and religionism, of which all the elements were discoverable in old Hebrew books, scraps of Alexandrian philosophy inextricably blent with Aristotelian, Platonic, Mystic.

He kept up a copious correspondence with scholars in other countries, and was universally esteemed and pitied.

'We haven't come to discuss the figures of the Maggid's name, but of his salary,' said Mr. Belcovitch, who prided himself on his capacity for conducting public business.

'I have examined the finances,' said Karlkammer, 'and I don't see how we can possibly put aside more for our preacher than the pound a week.'

'But he is not satisfied,' said Mr. Belcovitch.

'I don't see why he shouldn't be,' said the Shalotten Shammos. 'A pound a week is luxury for a single man.'

The Sons of the Covenant did not know that

the poor, consumptive Maggid sent half his salary to his sisters in Poland, to enable them to buy back their husbands from military service; also, they had vague, unexpressed ideas that he was not mortal, that Heaven would look after his larder, that, if the worst came to the worst, he could fall back on Cabalah and engage himself with the mysteries of food-creation.

'I have a wife and family to keep on a pound a week,' grumbled Greenberg the *Chazan*.

Besides being reader, Greenberg blew the horn and killed cattle, and circumcised male infants, and educated children, and discharged the functions of beadle and collector. He spent a great deal of his time in avoiding being drawn into the contending factions of the congregation, and in steering equally between Belcovitch and the Shalotten Shammos. The Sons only gave him fifty a year for all his trouble, but they eked it out by allowing him to be on the committee, where, on the question of a rise in the reader's salary, he was always an ineffective minority of one. His other grievance was that for the high festivals the Sons temporarily engaged a finer-voiced reader, and advertised him at raised prices to repay themselves out of the surplus congregation. Not only had Greenberg to play second fiddle on these grand occasions, but he had to iterate 'Pom!' as a sort of musical accom-

paniment in the pauses of his rival's vocalization.

'You can't compare yourself with the Maggid,' the Shalotten Shammos reminded him consolingly. 'There are hundreds of you in the market. There are several *morceaux* of the service which you do not sing half so well as your predecessor, your horn-blowing cannot compete with Freedman's of the Fashion Street *Chevrah*, nor can you read the Law as quickly and accurately as Prochintski. I have told you over and over again you confound the air of the Passover *Yigdal* with the New Year ditto. And, then, your preliminary flourish to the Confession of Sin—it goes, "Ei, Ei, Ei, Ei, Ei, Ei, Ei"' (he mimicked Greenberg's melody), 'whereas it should be, "Oi, Oi, Oi, Oi, Oi, Oi——"'

'Oh no!' interrupted Belcovitch. 'All the *Chazanim* I've ever heard do it: "Ei, Ei, Ei——"'

'You are not entitled to speak on this subject, Belcovitch,' said the Shalotten Shammos warmly. 'You are a Man-of-the-Earth. I have heard every great *Chazan* in Europe.'

'What was good enough for my father is good enough for me,' retorted Belcovitch. 'The *Shool* he took me to at home had a beautiful *Chazan*, and he always sang it, "Ei, Ei, Ei——"'

'I don't care what you heard at home. In England every *Chazan* sings, "Oi, Oi, Oi——"'

'We can't take our tune from England,' said Karlkammer reprovingly. 'England is a polluted country by reason of the Reformers, whom we were compelled to excommunicate.'

'Do you mean to say that my father was an Epicurean?' asked Belcovitch indignantly. 'The tune was as Greenberg sings it. That there are impious Jews who pray bareheaded and sit in the synagogue side by side with the women has nothing to do with it.'

The Reformers did neither of these things, but the Ghetto to a man believed they did, and it would have been countenancing their blasphemies to pay a visit to their synagogue and see. It was an extraordinary example of a myth flourishing in the teeth of the facts, and as such should be useful to historians sifting 'the evidence of contemporary writers.'

The dispute thickened; the synagogue hummed with 'Ei's' and 'Oi's' not in concord.

'Shah!' said the President at last. 'Make an end, make an end!'

'You see, he knows I'm right,' murmured the Shalotten Shammos to his circle.

'And if you are!' burst forth the impeached Greenberg, who had by this time thought of a retort. 'And if I do sing the Passover *Yigdal*

instead of the New Year, have I not reason, seeing I have *no bread in the house?* With my salary I have Passover all the year round.'

The *Chazan's* sally made a marked impression on his audience, if not on his salary. It was felt that he had a just grievance, and the conversation was hastily shifted to the original topic.

'We mustn't forget the Maggid draws crowds here every Saturday and Sunday afternoon,' said Mendel Hyams. 'Suppose he goes over to a *Chevrah* that will pay him more?'

'No, he won't do that,' said another of the committee. 'He will remember that we brought him out of Poland.'

'Yes; but we shan't have room for the audiences soon,' said Belcovitch. 'There are so many outsiders turned away every time that I think we ought to let half the applicants enjoy the first two hours of the sermon, and the other half the second two hours.'

'No, no; that would be cruel,' said Karlkammer. 'He will have to give the Sunday sermons at least in a larger synagogue. My own *Shool*, the German, will be glad to give him facilities.'

'But what if they want to take him altogether at a higher salary?' said Mendel.

'No, I'm on the committee—I'll see to that,' said Karlkammer reassuringly.

'Then, do you think we shall tell him we can't afford to give him more?' asked Belcovitch.

There was a murmur of assent, with a fainter mingling of dissent. The motion that the Maggid's application be refused was put to the vote, and carried by a large majority.

It was the fate of the Maggid to be the one subject on which Belcovitch and the Shalotten Shammos agreed. They agreed as to his transcendent merits, and they agreed as to the adequacy of his salary.

'But he's so weakly,' protested Mendel Hyams, who was in the minority. 'He coughs blood.'

'He ought to go to a sunny place for a week,' said Belcovitch compassionately.

'Yes, he must certainly have that,' said Karlkammer. 'Let us add as a rider that, although we cannot pay him more per week, he must have a week's holiday in the country. The Shalotten Shammos shall write the letter to Rothschild.'

Rothschild was a magic name in the Ghetto; it stood next to the Almighty's as a redresser of grievances and a friend of the poor, and the Shalotten Shammos made a large part of his income by writing letters to it. He charged twopence-halfpenny per letter, for his English vocabulary was larger than any other scribe's in the Ghetto, and his words were as much longer

than theirs as his body. He also filled up printed application-forms for soup or Passover cakes, and had a most artistic sense of the proportion of orphans permissible to widows, and a correct instinct for the plausible duration of sicknesses.

The Committee agreed *nem. con.* to the grant of a seaside holiday, and the Shalotten Shammos, with a gratified feeling of importance, waived his twopence-halfpenny. He drew up a letter forthwith, not of course in the name of the Sons of the Covenant, but in the Maggid's own.

He took the magniloquent sentences to the Maggid for signature. He found the Maggid walking up and down Royal Street, waiting for the verdict. The Maggid walked with a stoop that was almost a permanent bow, so that his long black beard reached well towards his baggy knees. His curved eagle-nose was grown thinner, his long coat shinier, his look more haggard, his corkscrew earlocks were more matted, and when he spoke his voice was a tone more raucous. He wore his high hat—a tall cylinder that reminded one of a weather-beaten turret.

The Shalotten Shammos explained briefly what he had done.

'May thy strength increase!' said the Maggid in the Hebrew formula of gratitude.

'Nay, thine is more important,' replied the Shalotten Shammos with hilarious heartiness. and he proceeded to read the letter as they walked along together, giant and doubled-up wizard.

'But I haven't got a wife and six children,' said the Maggid, for whom one or two phrases stood out intelligible. 'My wife is dead, and I never was blessed with a *Kaddish*.'

'It sounds better so,' said the Shalotten Shammos authoritatively. 'Preachers are expected to have heavy families dependent upon them. It would sound lies if I told the truth.'

This was an argument after the Maggid's own heart, but it did not quite convince him.

'But they will send and make inquiries,' he murmured.

'Then your family are in Poland; you send your money over there.'

'That is true,' said the Maggid feebly. 'But still it likes me not.'

'You leave it to me,' said the Shalotten Shammos impressively. 'A shamefaced man cannot learn, and a passionate man cannot teach. So said Hillel. When you are in the pulpit I listen to you; when I have my pen in hand, do you listen to me. As the proverb says, if I were a Rabbi, the town would burn; but if you were a scribe the letter would burn. I

don't pretend to be a Maggid; don't you set up to be a letter-writer.'

'Well, but do you think it's honourable——'

'Hear, O Israel!' cried the Shalotten Shammos, spreading out his palms impatiently. 'Haven't I written letters for twenty years?'

The Maggid was silenced. He walked on brooding.

'And what is this place—Burnmud—I ask to go to?' he inquired.

'Bournemouth,' corrected the other. 'It is a place on the South Coast where all the most aristocratic consumptives go.'

'But it must be very dear,' said the poor Maggid, affrighted.

'Dear? Of course it's dear,' said the Shalotten Shammos pompously. 'But shall we consider expense where your health is concerned?'

The Maggid felt so grateful he was almost ashamed to ask whether he could eat *Kosher* there, but the Shalotten Shammos, who had the air of a tall encyclopædia, set his soul at rest on all points.

CHAPTER XIII.

SUGARMAN'S BAR-MITZVAH PARTY.

THE day of Ebenezer Sugarman's *Bar-mitzvah* duly arrived. All his sins would henceforth be on his own head, and everybody rejoiced. By the Friday evening so many presents had arrived —four breast-pins, two rings, six pocket-knives, three sets of Machzorim, or Festival Prayer-Books, and the like—that his father barred up the door very carefully, and in the middle of the night, hearing a mouse scampering across the floor, woke up in a cold sweat and threw open the bedroom window and cried, 'Ho! buglers!' But the 'buglers' made no sign of being scared, everything was still and nothing purloined, so Jonathan took a reprimand from his disturbed wife and curled himself up again in bed.

Sugarman did things in style, and through the influence of a client the confirmation ceremony was celebrated in 'Duke's Plaizer

Shool.' Ebenezer, who was tall and weak-eyed, with lank black hair, had a fine new black cloth suit, and a beautiful silk praying-shawl with blue stripes, and a glittering watch-chain, and a gold ring, and a nice new Prayer-Book with gilt edges, and all the boys under thirteen made up their minds to grow up and be responsible for their sins as quick as possible. Ebenezer walked up to the reading-desk with a dauntless stride and intoned his portion of the Law with no more tremor than was necessitated by the musical roulades, and then marched upstairs as bold as brass to his mother, who was sitting up in the gallery, and who gave him a loud smacking kiss that could be heard in the four corners of the synagogue, just as if she were a real lady.

Then there was the *Bar-mitzvah* breakfast, at which Ebenezer delivered an English sermon and a speech, both openly written by the Shalotten Shammos, and everybody commended the boy's beautiful sentiments, and the beautiful language in which they were couched. Mrs. Sugarman forgot all the trouble Ebenezer had given her in the face of his assurances of respect and affection, and she wept copiously. Having only one eye, she could not see what her Jonathan saw, and what was spoiling his enjoyment of Ebenezer's effusive gratitude

to his dear parents for having trained him up in lofty principles.

It was chiefly male cronies who had been invited to breakfast, and the table had been decorated with biscuits and fruit and sweets not appertaining to the meal, but provided for the refreshment of the less-favoured visitors—such as Mr. and Mrs. Hyams—who would be dropping in during the day. Now, nearly every one of the guests had brought a little boy with him, each of whom stood like a page behind his father's chair.

Before starting on their prandial fried fish, these trenchermen took from the dainties wherewith the ornamental plates were laden, and gave thereof to their offspring. Now, this was only right and proper, because it is the prerogative of children to '*nash*' on these occasions. But, as the meal progressed, each father from time to time, while talking briskly to his neighbour, allowed his hand to stray mechanically into the plates, and thence negligently backwards into the hand of his infant, who stuffed the treasure into his pockets Sugarman fidgeted about uneasily; not one surreptitious seizure escaped him, and every one pricked him like a needle. Soon his soul grew punctured like a pin-cushion. The Shalotten Shammos was among the worst offenders, and he covered his back-handed proceedings with a ceaseless flow of complimentary conversation.

'Excellent fish, Mrs. Sugarman,' he said, dexterously slipping some almonds behind his chair.

'What?' said Mrs. Sugarman, who was hard of hearing.

'First-class plaice!' shouted the Shalotten Shammos, negligently conveying a bunch of raisins.

'So they ought to be,' said Mrs. Sugarman in her thin, tinkling accents; 'they were all alive in the pan.'

'Ah, did they twitter?' said Mr. Belcovitch, pricking up his ears.

'No,' Bessie interposed. 'What do you mean?'

'At home in my town,' said Mr. Belcovitch impressively, 'a fish made a noise in the pan one Friday.'

'Well, and suppose?' said the Shalotten Shammos, passing a fig to the rear. 'The oil frizzles.'

'Nothing of the kind,' said Belcovitch angrily; 'a real living noise. The woman snatched it out of the pan and ran with it to the Rabbi. But he did not know what to do. Fortunately, there was staying with him for the Sabbath a travelling Saint from the far city of Ridnik, a *Chassid*, very skilful in plagues and purifications, and able to make clean a creeping thing by a hundred and fifty reasons. He directed the

woman to wrap the fish in a shroud, and give it honourable burial as quickly as possible. The funeral took place the same afternoon, and a lot of people went in solemn procession to the woman's back-garden, and buried it with all seemly rites, and the knife with which it had been cut was buried in the same grave, having been defiled by contact with the demon. One man said it should be burnt, but that was absurd, because the demon would be only too glad to find itself in its native element; but to prevent Satan from rebuking the woman any more, its mouth was stopped with furnace ashes. There was no time to obtain Palestine earth, which would have completely crushed the demon.'

'The woman must have committed some *Nevirah*,' said Karlkammer.

'A true story!' said the Shalotten Shammos ironically. 'That tale has been over Warsaw this twelve month.'

'It occurred when I was a boy,' affirmed Belcovitch indignantly. 'I remember it quite well. Some people explained it favourably. Others were of opinion that the soul of the fishmonger had transmigrated into the fish, an opinion borne out by the death of the fishmonger a few days before. And the Rabbi is still alive to prove it—may his light continue to shine!—though they write that he has lost his memory.'

The Shalotten Shammos sceptically passed a pear to his son. Old Gabriel Hamburg, the scholar, came compassionately to the raconteur's assistance.

'Rabbi Solomon Maimon,' he said, 'has left it on record that he witnessed a similar funeral in Posen.'

'It was well she buried it,' said Karlkammer. 'It was an atonement for a child, and saved its life.'

The Shalotten Shammos laughed outright.

'Ah, laugh not,' said Mrs. Belcovitch, 'or you may laugh with blood. It isn't for my own sins that I was born with ill-matched legs.'

'I must laugh when I hear of God's fools burying fish anywhere but in their stomach,' said the Shalotten Shammos, transporting a Brazil nut to the rear, where it was quietly annexed by Solomon Ansell, who had sneaked in uninvited and ousted the other boy from his coign of vantage.

The conversation was becoming heated; Breckeloff turned the topic.

'My sister has married a man who can't play cards,' he said lugubriously.

'How lucky for her!' answered several voices.

'No, it's just her black luck!' he rejoined; 'for he *will* play.'

There was a burst of laughter, and then the

company remembered that Breckeloff was a *Badchan*, or jester.

'Why, your sister's husband is a splendid player,' said Sugarman with a flash of memory, and the company laughed afresh.

'Yes,' said Breckeloff. 'But he doesn't give me the chance of losing to him now, he's got such a stuck-up *Kotzon*. He belongs to Duke's Plaizer *Shool*, and comes there very late, and when you ask him his birthplace he forgets he was a *Pullack*, and says he comes from "behind Berlin."'

These strokes of true satire occasioned more merriment, and were worth a biscuit to Solomon Ansell, *vice* the son of the Shalotten Shammos.

Among the inoffensive guests were old Gabriel Hamburg, the scholar, and young Joseph Strelitski, the student, who sat together. On the left of the somewhat seedy Strelitski, pretty Bessie, in blue silk, presided over the coffee-pot. Nobody knew whence Bessie had stolen her good looks; probably from some remote ancestress. Bessie was in every way the most agreeable member of the family, inheriting some of her father's brains, but wisely going for the rest of herself to that remote ancestress.

Gabriel Hamburg and Joseph Strelitski had both had relations with No. 1, Royal Street for some time, yet they had hardly exchanged a word,

and their meeting at this breakfast-table found them as great strangers as though they had never seen each other. Strelitski came because he boarded with the Sugarmans, and Hamburg came because he sometimes consulted Jonathan Sugarman about a Talmudical passage. Sugarman was charged with the oral traditions of a chain of Rabbis, like an actor who knows all the 'business' elaborated by his predecessors, and even a scientific scholar like Hamburg found him occasionally and fortuitously illuminating. Even so Karlkammer's red hair was a pillar of fire in the trackless wilderness of Hebrew literature. Gabriel Hamburg was a mighty savant, who endured all things for the love of knowledge and the sake of six men in Europe who followed his work and profited by its results. Verily, fit audience, though few. But such is the fate of great scholars, whose readers are sown throughout the lands more sparsely than monarchs. One by one Hamburg grappled with the countless problems of Jewish literary history, settling dates and authors, disintegrating the books of the Bible into their constituent parts, now inserting a gap of centuries between two halves of the same chapter, now flashing the light of new theories upon the development of Jewish theology. He lived at Royal Street and the British Museum, for he spent most of his time groping among the

folios and manuscripts, and had no need for more than the little back bedroom behind the Ansells', stuffed with mouldy books. Nobody (who was anybody) had heard of him in England, and he worked on, unencumbered by patronage or a full stomach. The Ghetto itself knew little of him, for there were but few with whom he found intercourse satisfying. He was not 'orthodox' in belief, though eminently so in practice—which is all the Ghetto demands—not from hypocrisy, but from ancient prejudice. Scholarship had not shrivelled up his humanity, for he had a genial fund of humour and a gentle play of satire, and loved his neighbours for their folly and narrow-mindedness. Unlike Spinoza, too, he did not go out of his way to inform them of his heterodox views, content to comprehend the crowd rather than be misunderstood by it. He knew that the bigger soul includes the smaller, and that the smaller can never circumscribe the bigger. Such money as was indispensable for the endowment of research he earned by copying texts and hunting out references for the numerous scholars and clergymen who infest the Museum and prevent the general reader from having elbow-room. In person he was small and bent and snuffy.

Superficially more intelligible, Joseph Strelitski was really a deeper mystery than Gabriel Hamburg. He was known to be a recent arrival

on English soil, yet he spoke English fluently. He studied at Jews' College by day, and was preparing for the examinations at the London University. None of the other students knew where he lived, nor a bit of his past history. There was a vague idea afloat that he was an only child whose parents had been hounded to penury and death by Russian persecution, but who launched it nobody knew. His eyes were sad and earnest; a curl of raven hair fell forwards on his high brow; his clothing was shabby, and darned in places by his own hand. Beyond accepting the gift of education at the hands of dead men, he would take no help. On several distinct occasions the magic name Rothschild was appealed to on his behalf by well-wishers, and through its avenue of almoners it responded with its eternal quenchless, unquestioning generosity to students. But Joseph Strelitski always quietly sent back these bounties. He made enough to exist upon by touting for a cigar firm in the evenings. In the streets he walked with tight-pursed lips, dreaming no one knew what.

And yet there were times when his tight-pursed lips unclenched themselves, and he drew in great breaths even of Ghetto air with the huge contentment of one who has known suffocation. 'One can breathe here,' he seemed to be saying. The atmosphere, untainted by spies, venal

officials and jeering soldiery, seemed fresh and sweet. Here the ground was stable, not mined in all directions; no arbitrary ukase—veritable sword of Damocles—hung over the head and darkened the sunshine. In such a country, where faith was free and action untrammelled, mere living was an ecstasy when remembrance came over one; and so Joseph Strelitski sometimes threw back his head and breathed in liberty. The voluptuousness of the sensation cannot be known by born freemen.

When Joseph Strelitski's father was sent to Siberia, he took his nine-year-old boy with him, in infringement of the law that prohibits exiles from taking children above five years of age. The police authorities, however, raised no objection, and they permitted Joseph to attend the public school at Kansk, Yeniseisk province, where the Strelitski family resided. A year or so afterwards the Yeniseisk authorities accorded the family permission to reside in Yeniseisk, and Joseph, having given proof of brilliant abilities, was placed in the Yeniseisk Gymnasium. For nigh three years the boy studied here, astonishing the gymnasium with his extraordinary ability, when suddenly the Government authorities ordered the boy to return at once 'to the place where he was born.' In vain the school directors, won over by the poor boy's talent

and enthusiasm for study, petitioned the Government. The Yeniseisk authorities were again ordered to expel him. No respite was granted, and the thirteen-year-old lad was sent to Sokolk, in the government of Grodno, at the other extreme of European Russia, where he was quite alone in the world. Before he was sixteen he escaped to England, his soul branded by terrible memories and steeled by solitude to a stern strength.

At Sugarman's he spoke little, and then mainly with the father on scholastic points. After meals he retired quickly to his business or his sleeping-den, which was across the road. Bessie loved Daniel Hyams, but she was a woman, and Strelitski's neutrality piqued her. Even to-day it is possible he might not have spoken to Gabriel Hamburg if his other neighbour had not been Bessie. Gabriel Hamburg was glad to talk to the youth, the outlines of whose English history were known to him. Strelitski seemed to expand under the sunshine of a congenial spirit; he answered Hamburg's sympathetic inquiries about his work without reluctance, and even made some remarks on his own initiative.

And as they spoke, an under-current of pensive thought was flowing in the old scholar's soul, and his tones grew tenderer and tenderer. The echoes of Ebenezer's effusive speech were in

his ears, and the artificial notes rang strangely genuine. All round him sat happy fathers of happy children, men who warmed their hands at the home-fire of life, men who lived while he was thinking. Yet he, too, had had his chance far back in the dim and dusty years, his chance of love, and money with it. He had let it slip away for poverty and learning, and only six men in Europe cared whether he lived or died. The sense of his own loneliness smote him with a sudden aching desolation. His gaze grew humid; the face of the young student was covered with a veil of mist, and seemed to shine with the radiance of an unstained soul. If he had been as other men, he might have had such a son. At this moment Gabriel Hamburg was speaking of paragoge in Hebrew grammar, but his voice faltered, and in imagination he was laying hands of paternal benediction on Joseph Strelitski's head. Swayed by an overmastering impulse, he burst out at last:

'An idea strikes me.'

Strelitski looked up in silent interrogation at the old man's agitated face.

'You live by yourself. I live by myself. We are both students. Why should we not live together as students, too?'

A swift wave of surprise crossed Strelitski's face, and his eyes grew soft. For an instant the

one solitary soul visibly yearned towards the other. He hesitated.

'Do not think I am too old,' said the great scholar, trembling all over. 'I know it is the young who chum together, but still I am a student. And you shall see how lively and cheerful I will be.' He forced a smile that hovered on tears. 'We shall be two rackety young students, every night raising a thousand devils. *Gaudeamus igitur.*'

He began to hum in his cracked hoarse voice the *Burschen-lied* of his early days at the Berlin Gymnasium.

But Strelitski's face had grown dusky with a gradual flush and a deepening gloom. His black eyebrows were knit, and his lips set together, and his eyes full of sullen ire. He suspected a snare to assist him.

He shook his head.

'Thank you,' he said slowly. 'But I prefer to live alone.'

And he turned and spoke to the astonished Bessie, and so the two strange lonely vessels that had hailed each other across the darkness drifted away and apart for ever in the waste of waters.

But Jonathan Sugarman's eye was on more tragic episodes. Gradually the plates emptied, for the guests openly followed up the more substantial elements of the repast by dessert,

more devastating even than the rear manœuvres. At last there was nothing but an aching china blank. The men looked round the table for something else to '*nash*,' but everywhere was the same depressing desolation. Only in the centre of the table towered in awful intact majesty the great *Bar-mitzvah* cake, like some mighty sphinx of stone surveying the ruins of empires, and the least reverent shrank before its austere gaze. But at last the Shalotten Shammos shook off his awe and stretched out his hand leisurely towards the cake, as became a master of ceremonies. But when Sugarman the Shadchan beheld his hand moving like a creeping flame forward, he sprang towards him as the tigress springs when the hunter threatens her cub. And, speaking no word, he snatched the great cake from under the hand of the spoiler, and tucked it under his arm, in the place where he carried Nehemiah, and sped therewith from the room. Then consternation fell upon the scene till Solomon Ansell, crawling on hands and knees in search of windfalls, discovered a basket of apples stored under the centre of the table, and the Shalotten Shammos's son told his father thereof ere Solomon could do more than secure a few for his brother and sisters Then the Shalotten Shammos laughed joyously, 'Apples!' and dived under the table, and his long form reached to

the other side and beyond, and gray-bearded men echoed the joyous cry and scrambled on the ground like schoolboys.

'*Leolom tikkach*—always take,' quoted the *Badchan* gleefully.

When Sugarman returned, radiant, he found his absence had been fatal.

'Piece of fool! Two-eyed lump of flesh!' said Mrs. Sugarman in a loud whisper. 'Flying out of the room as if thou hadst the ague!'

'Shall I sit still like thee while our home is eaten up around us?' Sugarman whispered back. 'Couldst thou not look to the apples? Plaster image! Leaden fowl! See, they have emptied the basket, too.'

'Well, dost thou expect luck and blessing to crawl into it? Even five shillings' worth of *Nash* cannot last for ever. May ten ammunition-waggons of black curses be discharged on thee!' replied Mrs. Sugarman, her one eye shooting fire.

This was the last straw of insult added to injury. Sugarman was exasperated beyond endurance. He forgot that he had a wider audience than his wife. He lost all control of himself, and cried aloud in a frenzy of rage:

'What a pity thou hadst not a fourth uncle!'

Mrs. Sugarman collapsed, speechless.

'A greedy lot, marm!' Sugarman reported to

Mrs. Hyams on the Monday. 'I was very glad you and your people didn't come. Dere was noding left, except de prospectuses of de Hamburg lotteree vich I left laying all about for de guests to take. Being Shabbos, I could not give dem out.'

'We were sorry not to come, but neither Mr. Hyams nor myself felt well,' said the white-haired, broken-down old woman, with her painfully slow enunciation. Her English words rarely went beyond two syllables.

'Ah!' said Sugarman. 'But I've come to give you back your corkscrew.'

'Why, it's broken!' said Mrs. Hyams as she took it.

'So it is, marm,' he admitted readily. 'But if you taink dat I ought to pay for de damage, you're mistaken. If you lend me your cat'—here he began to make the argumentative movement with his thumb, as though scooping out imaginary *kosher* cheese with it—'if you lend me your cat to kill my rat'—his tones took on the strange Talmudic sing-song—'and my rat, instead, kills your cat, then it is the fault of your cat, and not the fault of my rat.'

Poor Mrs. Hyams could not meet this argument. If Mendel had been at home, he might have found a counter-analogy. As it was, Sugarman re-tucked Nehemiah under his arm and de-

parted triumphant, almost consoled for the raid on his provisions by the thought of money saved. In the street he met the Shalotten Shammos.

'Blessed art thou who comest!' said the giant in Hebrew; then, relapsing into Yiddish, he cried: 'I've been wanting to see you! What did you mean by telling your wife you were sorry she had not a fourth uncle?'

'She knew what I meant,' said Sugarman, with a little croak of victory. 'I have told her the story before. When the Almighty Shadchan was making marriages in heaven, before we were yet born, the name of my wife was coupled with my own. The spirit of her eldest uncle, hearing this, flew up to the angel who made the proclamation, and said, "Angel, thou art making a mistake! The man of whom thou makest mention will be of a lower status than this future niece of mine." Said the angel, "Sh! It is all right. She will halt on one leg." Came then the spirit of her second uncle, and said, "Angel, what blazonest thou? A niece of mine marry a man of such family!" Says the angel, "Sh! It is all right. She will be blind in one eye." Came the spirit of her third uncle, and said, "Angel, hast thou not erred? Surely thou canst not mean to marry my future niece into such a humble family!" Says the angel, "Sh! It is all right. She will be deaf in one ear."

Now do you see? If she had only had a fourth uncle, she would have been dumb into the bargain; there is only one mouth, and my life would have been a happy one. Before I told my wife that history she used to throw up her better breeding and finer family to me. Even in public she would shed my blood. Now she does not do it even in private.'

Sugarman the Shadchan winked, readjusted Nehemiah, and went his way.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOPE OF THE FAMILY.

It was a cold, bleak Sunday afternoon, and the Ansells were spending it as usual. Little Sarah was with Mrs. Simons, Rachel had gone to Victoria Park with a party of school-mates; the grandmother was asleep on the bed, covered with one of her son's old coats (for there was no fire in the grate), with her pious vade-mecum in her hand; Esther had prepared her lessons, and was reading a little brown book at Dutch Debby's, not being able to forget the *London Journal* sufficiently; Solomon had not prepared his, and was playing 'rounder' in the street, Isaac being permitted to 'feed' the strikers in return for a prospective occupation of his new bed; Moses Ansell was at *Shool*, listening to a *Hesped* or funeral oration at the German synagogue, preached by Reb Shemuel over one of the lights of the Ghetto, prematurely gone out—no other than

the consumptive Maggid, who had departed suddenly for a less fashionable place than Bournemouth. 'He has fallen,' said the Reb, 'not laden with age, nor sighing for release because the grasshopper was a burden. But He who holds the keys said: "Thou hast done thy share of the work; it is not thine to complete it. It was in thy heart to serve Me; from Me thou shalt receive thy reward."'

And all the perspiring crowd in the black-draped hall shook with grief, and thousands of working men followed the body weeping to the grave, walking all the way to the great cemetery in Bow.

A slim, black-haired handsome lad of about twelve, dressed in a neat black suit with a shining white Eton collar, stumbled up the dark stairs of No 1, Royal Street, with an air of unfamiliarity and disgust. At Dutch Debby's door he was delayed by a brief altercation with Bobby. He burst open the door of the Ansell apartment without knocking, though he took off his hat involuntarily as he entered. Then he stood still with an air of disappointment. The room seemed empty.

'What dost thou want, Esther?' murmured the grandmother, rousing herself sleepily.

The boy looked towards the bed with a start. He could not make out what the grandmother was

saying. It was four years since he had heard Yiddish spoken, and he had almost forgotten the existence of the dialect. The room, too, seemed chill and alien—so unspeakably poverty-stricken.

'Oh, how are you, grandmother?' he said, going up to her and kissing her perfunctorily. 'Where's everybody?'

'Art thou Benjamin?' said the grandmother, her stern wrinkled face shadowed with surprise and doubt.

Benjamin guessed what she was asking, and nodded.

'But how richly they have dressed thee! Alas, I suppose they have taken away thy Judaism instead. For four whole years—is it not?—thou hast been with English folk. Woe! woe! If thy father had married a pious woman she would have been living still, and thou wouldst have been able to live happily in our midst, instead of being exiled among strangers, who feed thy body and starve thy soul. If thy father had left me in Poland I should have died happy, and my old eyes would never have seen the sorrow. Unbutton thy waistcoat; let me see if thou wearest the "four-corners" at least.'

Of this harangue, poured forth at the rate natural to thoughts running ever in the same grooves, Benjamin understood but a word here and there. For four years he had read and read

and read English books, absorbed himself in English composition, heard nothing but English spoken about him—nay, he had even deliberately put the jargon out of his mind at the commencement, as something degrading and humiliating. Now it struck vague notes of old out-grown associations, but called up no definite images.

'Where's Esther?' he said.

'Esther?' grumbled the grandmother, catching the name. 'Esther is with Dutch Debby. She's always with her. Dutch Debby pretends to love her like a mother. And why?—because she wants to *be* her mother. She aims at marrying my Moses. But not for us. This time we shall marry the woman I select. No person like that, who knows as much about Judaism as the cow of Sunday—nor like Mrs. Simons, who coddles our little Sarah because she thinks my Moses will have her. It's plain as the eye in her head what she wants. But the Widow Finkelstein is the woman we're going to marry. She is a true Jewess—shuts up her shop the moment Shabbos comes in, not works right into the Sabbath like so many, and goes to *Shool* even on Friday nights. Look how she brought up her Avromkely, who intoned the whole portion of the Law and the Prophets in *Shool* before he was six years old. Besides, she has money and has cast eyes upon him.'

The boy, seeing conversation was hopeless, murmured something inarticulate and ran down the stairs to find some traces of the intelligible members of his family. Happily Bobby, remembering their former altercation and determining to have the last word, barred Benjamin's path with such pertinacity that Esther came out to quiet him, and leapt into her brother's arms with a great cry of joy, dropping the book she held full on Bobby's nose.

'Oh, Benjy! Is it really you? Oh, I am so glad! I am so glad! I knew you would come some day. Oh, Benjy!—Bobby, you bad dog, this is Benjy, my brother. Debby, I'm going upstairs; Benjamin's come back! Benjamin's come back!'

'All right, dear,' Debby called out. 'Let me have a look at him soon. Send me in Bobby, if you're going away.' The words ended in a cough.

Esther hurriedly drove in Bobby, and then half led, half dragged, Benjamin upstairs. The grandmother had fallen asleep again, and was snoring peacefully.

'Speak low, Benjy,' said Esther; 'grandmother's asleep.'

'All right, Esther. I don't want to wake her, I'm sure. I was up here just now, and I couldn't make out a word she was jabbering.'

'I know. She's losing all her teeth, poor thing!'

'No, it isn't that. She speaks that beastly Yiddish. I made sure she'd have learnt English by this time. I hope *you* don't speak it, Esther.'

'I must, Benjy. You see, father and grandmother never speak anything else at home, and only know a few words of English. But I don't let the children speak it, except to them. You should hear little Sarah speak English. It's beautiful. Only when she cries she says "Woe is me!" in Yiddish. I have had to slap her for it, but that makes her cry "Woe is me!" all the more. Oh, how nice you look, Benjy, with your white collar—just like the pictures of little Lord Launceston in the Fourth Standard Reader! I wish I could show you to the girls! Oh my! what'll Solomon say when he sees you? He's always wearing his corduroys away at the knees.'

'But where is everybody? And why is there no fire?' said Benjamin impatiently. 'It's beastly cold.'

'Father hopes to get a bread, coal, and meat ticket to-morrow, dear.'

'Well, this is a pretty welcome for a fellow!' grumbled Benjamin.

'I'm so sorry, Benjy! If I'd only known you

were coming I might have borrowed some coals from Mrs. Belcovitch. But just stamp your feet a little if they freeze. No, do it outside the door —grandmother's asleep. Why didn't you write to me you were coming?'

'I didn't know. Old Four-Eyes—that's one of our teachers—was going up to London this afternoon, and he wanted a boy to carry some parcels, and as I'm the best boy in my class he let me come. He let me run up and see you all, and I'm to meet him at London Bridge Station at seven o'clock. You're not much altered, Esther.'

'Ain't I?' she said, with a little pathetic smile. 'Ain't I bigger?'

'Not four years bigger. For a moment I could fancy I'd never been away. How the years slip by! I shall be *bar-mitzvah* soon.'

'Yes; and now I've got you again I've so much to say I don't know where to begin. That time father went to see you I couldn't get much out of him about you, and your own letters have been so few.'

'A letter costs a penny, Esther. Where am I to get pennies from?'

'I know, dear. I know you would have liked to write. But now you shall tell me everything. Have you missed us very much?'

'No, I don't think so,' said Benjamin.

'Oh, not at all?' asked Esther, in disappointed tones.

'Yes; I missed *you*, Esther, at first,' he said soothingly. 'But there's such a lot to do and to think about. It's a new life.'

'And have you been happy, Benjy?'

'Oh yes; quite. Just think! Regular meals, with oranges and sweets and entertainments every now and then, a bed all to yourself, good fires, a mansion with a noble staircase and hall, a field to play in, with balls and toys——'

'A field!' echoed Esther. 'Why, it must be like going to Greenwich every day.'

'Oh, better than Greenwich, where they take you girls for a measly day's holiday once a year.'

'Better than the Crystal Palace, where they take the boys?'

'Why, the Crystal Palace is quite near. We can see the fireworks every Thursday night in the season.'

Esther's eyes opened wider.

'And have you been inside?'

'Lots of times.'

'Do you remember the time you didn't go?' Esther said softly.

'A fellow doesn't forget that sort of thing,' he grumbled. 'I so wanted to go—I had heard such a lot about it from the boys who had been.

When the day of the excursion came my Shabbos coat was in pawn, wasn't it?'

'Yes,' said Esther, her eyes growing humid. 'I was so sorry for you, dear. You didn't want to go in your corduroy coat and let the boys know you didn't have a best coat. It was quite right, Benjy.'

'I remember mother gave me a treat instead,' said Benjamin, with a comic grimace. 'She took me round to Zachariah Square and let me play there while she was scrubbing Malka's floor. I think Milly gave me a penny, and I remember Leah let me take a couple of licks from a glass of ice-cream she was eating on the Ruins. It was a hot day—I shall never forget that ice-cream. But fancy parents pawning a chap's only decent coat!' He smoothed his well-brushed jacket complacently.

'Yes; but don't you remember mother took it out the very next morning before school with the money she earnt at Malka's?'

'But what was the use of that? I put it on, of course, when I went to school, and told the teacher I was ill the day before, just to show the boys I was telling the truth. But it was too late to take me to the Palace.'

'Ah, but it came in handy. Don't you remember, Benjy, how one of the great ladies died suddenly the next week?'

'Oh yes! Yoicks! tally-ho!' cried Benjamin with sudden excitement. 'We went down on hired omnibuses to the cemetery, ever so far into the country, six of the best boys in each class; and I was on the box-seat next to the driver, and I thought of the old mail-coach days and looked out for highwaymen. We stood along the path in the cemetery, and the sun was shining, and the grass was so green, and there were such lovely flowers on the coffin when it came past, with the gentlemen crying behind it. And then we had lemonade and cakes on the way back. Oh, it was just beautiful! I went to two other funerals after that, but that was the one I enjoyed most. Yes, that coat did come in useful, after all, for a day in the country.'

Benjamin evidently did not think of his own mother's interment as a funeral. Esther did, and she changed the subject quickly.

'Well, tell me more about your place.'

'Well, it's like going to funerals every day. It's all country all round about, with trees and flowers and birds. Why, I've helped to make hay in the autumn!'

Esther drew a sigh of ecstasy.

'It's like a book!' she said.

'Books!' he said. 'We've got hundreds and hundreds—a whole library. Dickens, Mayne Reid, George Eliot, Captain Marryat, Thackeray—I've read them all.'

'Oh, Benjy!' said Esther, clapping her hands in admiration both of the library and her brother. 'I wish I were you.'

'Well, you could be me easily enough.'

'How?' said Esther eagerly.

'Why, we have a girls' department too. You're an orphan as much as me. You get father to enter you as a candidate.'

'Oh, how could I, Benjy?' said Esther, her face falling. 'What would become of Solomon and Ikey and little Sarah?'

'They've got a father, haven't they, and a grandmother?'

'Father can't do washing and cooking, you silly boy! and grandmother's too old.'

'Well, I call it a beastly shame. Why can't father earn a living and give out the washing? He never has a penny to bless himself with.'

'It isn't his fault, Benjy. He tries hard. I'm sure he often grieves that he's so poor that he can't afford the railway-fare to visit you on visiting days. That time he did go, he only got the money by selling a workbox I had for a prize. But he often speaks about you.'

'Well, I don't grumble at his not coming,' said Benjamin. 'I forgive him that, because, you know, he's not very presentable, is he, Esther?'

Esther was silent.

'Oh, well, everybody knows he's poor. They don't expect father to be a gentleman.'

'Yes, but he might look decent. Does he still wear those two beastly little curls at the side of his head? Oh, I did hate it when I was at school here and he used to come to see the master about something. Some of the boys had such respectable fathers; it was quite a pleasure to see them come in and overawe the teacher. Mother used to be as bad, coming in with a shawl over her head!'

'Yes, Benjy, but she used to bring us in bread-and-butter when there had been none in the house at breakfast-time. Don't you remember, Benjy?'

'Oh yes, I remember. We've been through some beastly bad times, haven't we, Esther? All I say is, you wouldn't like father coming in before all the girls in your class, would you, now?'

Esther blushed.

'There is no occasion for him to come,' she said evasively.

'Well, I know what I shall do!' said Benjamin decisively. 'I am going to be a very rich man.'

'Are you, Benjy?' inquired Esther.

'Yes, of course. I'm going to write books—like Dickens and those fellows. Dickens made a pile of money just by writing down plain everyday things going on around.'

'But you can't write!'

Benjamin laughed a superior laugh.

'Oh, can't I? What about *Our Own*, eh?'

'What's that?'

'That's our journal. I edit it. Didn't I tell you about it? Yes, I'm running a story through it, called "The Soldier's Bride"—all about life in Afghanistan.'

'Oh, where could I get a number?'

'You can't get one. It ain't printed, stupid! It's all copied by hand, and we've only got a few copies. If you came down, you could see it.'

'Yes, but I can't come down,' said Esther, with tears in her eyes.

'Well, never mind. You'll see it some day. Well, what was I telling you? Oh yes—about my prospects. You see, I'm going in for a scholarship in a few months, and everybody says I shall get it. Then perhaps I might go to a higher school, and then to Oxford or Cambridge.'

'And row in the boat-race!' said Esther, flushing with excitement.

'No; bother the boat-race! I'm going in for Latin and Greek. I've begun to learn French already. So I shall know three languages.'

'Four!' said Esther. 'You forget Hebrew!'

'Oh, of course Hebrew. I don't reckon Hebrew. Everybody knows Hebrew. Hebrew's no good to anyone. What I want is something

that'll get me on in the world and enable me to write my books.'

'But Dickens—did he know Latin or Greek?' asked Esther.

'No, he didn't,' said Benjamin proudly. 'That's just where I shall have the pull of him. Well, when I've got rich I shall buy father a new suit of clothes and a high hat—it *is* so beastly cold here, Esther; just feel my hands, like ice!—and I shall make him live with grandmother in a decent room, and give him an allowance, so that he can study beastly big books all day long—does he still take a week to read a page? And Sarah and Isaac and Rachel shall go to a proper boarding-school, and Solomon—how old will he be then?'

Esther looked puzzled.

'Oh, but suppose it takes you ten years getting famous? Solomon will be nearly twenty.'

'It can't take me ten years. But never mind! We shall see what is to be done with Solomon when the time comes. As for you—'

'Well, Benjy?' she said, for his imagination was breaking down.

'I'll give you a dowry and you'll get married. See!' he concluded triumphantly.

'Oh, but suppose I shan't want to get married?'

'Nonsense! every girl wants to get married.

I overheard Old Four-Eyes say all the teachers in the girls' department were dying to marry him. I've got several sweethearts already, and I dare say you have.' He looked at her quizzingly.

'No, dear,' she said earnestly. 'There's only Levi Jacobs, Reb Shemuel's son, who's been coming round sometimes to play with Solomon, and brings me almond-rock. But I don't care for him—at least, not in that way. Besides, he's quite above us.'

'*Oh*, is he? Wait till I write my novels!'

'I wish you'd write them now—because then I should have something to read. Oh!'

'What's the matter?'

'I've lost my book. What have I done with my little brown book?'

'Didn't you drop it on that beastly dog?'

'Oh, did I? People 'll tread on it on the stairs. Oh dear! I'll run down and get it. But don't call Bobby beastly, please.'

'Why not? Dogs are beasts, aren't they?'

Esther puzzled over the retort as she flew downstairs, but could find no reply. She found the book, however, and that consoled her.

'What have you got hold of?' said Benjamin when she returned.

'Oh, nothing! It wouldn't interest you.'

'All books interest me,' announced Benjamin with dignity.

Esther reluctantly gave him the book. He turned over the pages carelessly, then his face grew serious and astonished.

'Esther,' he said, 'how did you come by this?'

'One of the girls gave it me in exchange for a stick of slate-pencil. She said she got it from the missionaries—she went to their night-school for a lark, and they gave her it, and a pair of boots as well.'

'And you have been reading it?'

'Yes, Benjy,' said Esther meekly.

'You naughty girl! Don't you know the New Testament is a wicked book? Look here! There's the word "Christ" on nearly every page, and the word "Jesus" on every other. And you haven't even scratched them out! Oh, if anyone was to catch you reading this book!'

'I don't read it in school-hours,' said the little girl deprecatingly.

'But you have no business to read it at all.'

'Why not?' she said doggedly. 'I like it. It seems just as interesting as the Old Testament, and there are more miracles to the page.'

'You wicked girl!' said her brother, overwhelmed by her audacity. 'Surely you know that all those miracles were false?'

'Why were they false?' persisted Esther.

'Because miracles left off after the Old Testament! There are no miracles nowadays, are there?'

'No,' admitted Esther.

'Well, then,' he said triumphantly, 'if miracles had gone overlapping into New Testament times, we might just as well expect to have them now.'

'But why shouldn't we have them now?'

'Esther, I'm surprised at you! I should like to set Old Four-Eyes on to you. He'd soon tell you why. Religion all happened in the past. God couldn't be always talking to His creatures.'

'I wish I'd lived in the past, when religion was happening,' said Esther ruefully. 'But why do Christians all reverence this book? I'm sure there are many more millions of them than of Jews!'

'Of course there are, Esther. Good things are scarce. We are so few because we are God's chosen people.'

'But why do I feel good when I read what Jesus said?'

'Because you are so bad,' he answered, in a shocked tone. 'Here, give me the book; I'll burn it!'

'No, no!' said Esther. 'Besides, there's no fire.'

'No, hang it!' he said, rubbing his hands. 'Well, it'll never do if you have to fall back on this sort of thing. I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll send you *Our Own*.'

'Oh, will you, Benjy? That is good of you!' she said joyfully, and was kissing him, when

Solomon and Isaac came romping in and woke up the grandmother.

'How are you, Solomon?' said Benjamin. 'How are you, my little man?' he added, patting Isaac on his curly head.

Solomon was overawed for a moment. Then he said: 'Hullo, Benjy! Have you got any spare buttons?'

But Isaac was utterly ignorant who the stranger could be, and hung back with his finger in his mouth.

'That's your brother Benjamin, Ikey,' said Solomon.

'Don't want no more brovers,' said Ikey.

'Oh, but I was here before you,' said Benjamin, laughing.

'Does oor birfday come before mine, then?'

'Yes, if I remember.'

Isaac looked tauntingly at the door.

'See!' he cried to the absent Sarah. Then, turning graciously to Benjamin, he said, 'I thant kiss oo, but I'll lat oo teep in my new bed.'

'But you *must* kiss him,' said Esther, and saw that he did it before she left the room to fetch little Sarah from Mrs. Simons.

When she came back Solomon was letting Benjamin inspect his Plevna peep-show without charge, and Moses Ansell was back, too. His eyes were red with weeping, but that was on

account of the Maggid. His nose was blue with the chill of the cemetery.

'He was a great man,' he was saying to the grandmother. 'He could lecture for four hours together on any text, and he would always manage to get back to the text before the end. Such exegetics! such homiletics! He was greater than the Emperor of Russia. Woe! woe!'

'Woe! woe!' echoed the grandmother. 'If women were allowed to go to funerals, I would gladly have followed him. Why did he come to England? In Poland he would still have been alive. And why did I come to England? Woe! woe!'

Her head dropped back on the pillow, and her sighs passed gently into snores. Moses turned again to his eldest-born, feeling that he was secondary in importance only to the Maggid, and proud at heart of his genteel English appearance.

'Well, you'll soon be *Bar-mitzvah*, Benjamin,' he said with clumsy geniality, blent with respect, as he patted his boy's cheek with his discoloured fingers.

Benjamin caught the last two words, and nodded his head.

'And then you'll be coming back to us. I suppose they will apprentice you to something?'

'What does he say, Esther?' asked Benjamin impatiently.

Esther interpreted.

'Apprentice me to something!' he repeated, disgusted. 'Father's ideas are so beastly humble. He would like everybody to dance on him. Why, he'd be content to see me a cigar-maker or a presser. Tell him I'm not coming home—that I'm going to win a scholarship and go to the University.'

Moses's eyes dilated with pride. 'Ah, you will become a Rav!' he said, and lifted up his boy's chin and looked lovingly into the handsome face.

'What's that about a Rav, Esther?' said Benjamin. 'Does he want me to become a Rabbi? Ugh! Tell him I'm going to write books.'

'My blessed boy! A good commentary on the Song of Songs is much needed. Perhaps you will begin by writing that.'

'Oh, it's no use talking to him, Esther! Let him be. Why can't he speak English?'

'He can, but you'd understand even less,' said Esther, with a sad smile.

'Well, all I say is it's a beastly disgrace! Look at the years he's been in England—just as long as we have.' Then the humour of the remark dawned upon him, and he laughed. 'I suppose he's out of work, as usual?' he added.

Moses's ears pricked up at the syllables 'out-of-work,' which to him was a single word of baleful meaning.

'Yes,' he said in Yiddish. 'But if I only had a few pounds to start with, I could work up a splendid business.'

'Wait! He shall have a business,' said Benjamin when Esther interpreted.

'Don't listen to him,' said Esther. 'The Board of Guardians has started him again and again. But he likes to think he is a man of business.'

Meantime Isaac had been busy explaining Benjamin to Sarah, and pointing out the remarkable confirmation of his own views as to birthdays. This will account for Esther's next remark being:

'Now, dears, no fighting to-day! We must celebrate Benjy's return. We ought to kill a fatted calf—like the man in the Bible.'

'What are you talking about, Esther?' said Benjamin suspiciously.

'I'm so sorry—nothing—only foolishness,' said Esther. 'We really must do something to make a holiday of the occasion. Oh, I know! we'll have tea before you go, instead of waiting till supper-time. Perhaps Rachel 'll be back from the park. You haven't seen her yet.'

'No, I can't stay,' said Benjy. 'It'll take me three-quarters of an hour getting to the station. And you've got no fire to make tea with, either.'

'Nonsense, Benjy! You seem to have for-

gotten everything; we've got a loaf and a penn'uth of tea in the cupboard. Solomon, fetch a farthing's-worth of boiling water from the Widow Finkelstein.'

At the words 'Widow Finkelstein' the grandmother awoke and sat up.

'No, I'm too tired,' said Solomon. 'Isaac can go.'

'No,' said Isaac. 'Let Esther go.'

Esther took a jug and went to the door.

'Méshe,' said the grandmother, 'go thou to the Widow Finkelstein.'

'But Esther can go,' said Moses.

'Yes, I'm going,' said Esther.

'Méshe!' repeated the Bube inexorably, 'go thou to the Widow Finkelstein.'

Moses went.

'Have you said the afternoon prayer, boys?' the old woman asked.

'Yes,' said Solomon, 'while you were asleep.'

'Oh-h-h!' said Esther under her breath. And she looked reproachfully at Solomon.

'Well, didn't you say we must make a holiday to-day?' he whispered back.

END OF VOL. I.

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